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NAME OF SUPERVISOR/*NOM DU DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE* Dr. R. J. Merrett

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LANGUAGE AND MORAL FORM IN GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

by

Donna McIvor

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Language and Moral Form in Gulliver's Travels" submitted by Donna McIvor in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

R.J. Merrett
Supervisor

R.D. McMaster

D.L. MacKenzie

Date August 4th 1977

ABSTRACT

A close examination of Swift's satire on language in Gulliver's Travels uncovers his distrust of the linguistic theories of John Locke and the Royal Society. Swift exposes a fallacious equation of language and reality in these contemporary linguistic influences and in all simplistic systems of language use. Through Gulliver, Swift warns of the dangers of self-deception and manipulative control which a priori schemes of language impose on the individual. Consequently, Swift refrains from the presentation of any models for the use of human language, indicating instead through the Houyhnhnms the integrity denied human language. To the degree that the reader remains blind to the limitations of human language, and to the degree that he participates in Gulliver's folly, he ignores the complexities of human existence and demonstrates his willingness to abandon human responsibilities to the control of verbal worlds.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1712 with "A Proposal For Correcting Improving and Ascertaining The English Tongue" Swift expresses his concern for the abuses of language. He continues his concern in Gulliver's Travels which contains wide-ranging and apparently diverse instances of satire on language. Writers commonly treat Swift's attacks upon language in the Travels as distinct and isolated criticisms. Swift maintains a linguistic interest throughout the Travels, however, which suggests that language is more than an occasional subject for satire. With the narration Swift parodies the detailed and circumstantial account of actual eighteenth-century voyages.[1] He ridicules the extremities of the new style in the passage of mariners' jargon which begins Book II.[2] In Book III, the Voyage to Laputa, he criticizes schemes for the improvement of the language.[3] He frequently presents Gulliver as a pretentious linguist and etymologist who pedantically explains the details of exotic tongues. He attacks Gulliver's intellectual pride as Gulliver comments upon the merits and deficiencies of the various languages he learns and upon the progress he makes in each of them. Swift even suggests with the Brobdingnagian language a possible direction for the reformation of English.

The scientific and philosophic pursuits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries underlie Swift's particular criticisms of language. The advent of Newtonian physics and mathematics as well as Locke's empiricism led to a new emphasis upon observable phenomena and the means of perceiving them. With the belief that knowledge could be attained

through empirical observation came a demand for a new form of language which would accurately communicate the new findings. The Royal Society advised explorers to avoid ornate and florid expressions and to record their voyages in direct and factual language.[4] Prompting the advice of the Society was the assumption that the new style would more precisely reflect reality and, consequently, truth. The same desire for simplicity and clarity motivated the search for an universal tongue by which communication would be furthered among all nations. Paul Cornelius' study of the languages in seventeenth and eighteenth-century travel books points to the pervasive scientific influence:

> The linguists of the seventeenth century in Europe were highly curious about the languages of far-away peoples, as we might expect them to have been in that age of exploration and discovery. With their preoccupation for regarding the best language as a clear and exact representation of material reality, and with their hope of finding a language that had escaped the calamity at Babel, they were especially interested in those languages that seemed to approach their own scientific ideals.[5]

Cornelius' comment reveals the association of religious beliefs with the scientific goals of a pure, factual language. Early, primitive languages were thought closer to truth because of their proximity to the original language of Adam. The tongues of isolated and unknown peoples were obvious objects for linguistic speculations of this sort. Similarly, the search for a pure, primitive language led to the application of scientific methods to word origins or etymology. Locke's refutation of innate ideas, which at first seems contrary to these trends, had similar effects upon language by stressing the uncertain meaning of words and the necessity of vigilance in their use. Locke's rationalistic delineation of the means by which man arrives at knowledge and, ultimately, truth forced him to re-examine language and the role it performed in the

attainment of truth:

> . . . I began to examine the Extent and Certainty of our Knowledge, I found it had so near a connexion with words, that unless their force and manner of Signification were first well observed, there would be very little said clearly and pertinently concerning Knowledge: which being conversant about Truth, had constantly to do with Propositions.[6]

In his Essay Locke devotes an entire book to the abuses of language and the means of correcting them.

The contemporary pressures for language to mirror truth, which Locke exemplifies, are behind Swift's criticisms of language. Not surprisingly, the assumption that language is capable of representing reality both intrigues the moralist and excites the scorn of the satirist in Swift. The further assumption, or presumption, that the new style would increase moral knowledge and, thereby, improve mankind was even more likely to arouse the doubts of the satirist. Locke, for all his protestations to the contrary, actually makes such optimistic claims for language:

> . . . I am bold to think that Morality is capable of Demonstration, as well as Mathematicks: Since the precise real Essence of the Things moral Words stand for, may be perfectly known; and so the Congruity, or Incongruity of Things themselves, be certainly discovered, in which consists perfect Knowledge.[7]

Gulliver, despite his amusing defensiveness, also claims to adhere to truth and to promote the moral improvement of his readers with his new style of narration:

> I hope, the gentle Reader will excuse me for dwelling on these and the like Particulars; which however insignificant they may appear to grovelling vulgar Minds, yet will certainly help a Philosopher to enlarge his Thoughts and Imagination, and apply them to the Benefit of publick as well as private Life; which was my sole Design in presenting this and other Accounts of my Travels to the World; wherein I have been chiefly studious of Truth, without affecting any Ornaments of Learning or Style.[8]

Gulliver expresses the philosophy of the new style which maintains that truth is represented by the recording of empirical data. Every fact, no matter how slight, adds to man's knowledge. Language which is not confined to the recording of facts is affected.

By examining the manner in which Swift manipulates the new style an understanding emerges of how and why he distrusts the contemporary beliefs about the relation of truth and language. Yet, despite his distrust of the assumptions of the new style, Swift's proposal for improving the language seems to advocate reformations for language similar to those of the new style. In the proposal he declares "Simplicity . . . is one of the greatest Perfections in any language."[9] In Gulliver's Travels the language of the Brobdingnagians, which has many features of the new style, appears to be worthy of praise and admiration. The number of readers who have been deluded by the verisimilitude of the Travels attests to the seeming validity of the new style's claim to depict reality. The task of the satirist, that of moral improvement, seems congruent with the doctrines of the new style which he derides. The conjunction of criticism of the new style with the promotion of many of its characteristics suggests that Swift is exploring the ambiguous nature of truth, the lack of definite boundaries between fantasy and reality, the interaction of art and life, and, ultimately, moral persuasion and satire.

CHAPTER I

LOCKE AND GULLIVER'S LANGUAGE

The difficulty of deriving a set of consistently sustained beliefs from Gulliver's Travels has driven some critics to the opposite extreme of viewing the work as an overall refutation of contemporary philosophies. For instance, Seelye implies that Swift's private convictions can be inferred from his use of Gulliver to undermine Hobbes's philosophy of self-preservation, Leviathan.[1] Again Papejewski, who interprets Gulliver's Travels as a rejection of Berkley's philosophy, concludes that Swift is an empiricist.[2] To posit allusions to Locke in Gulliver's Travels is not to suggest that Swift systematically refutes An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Rather, Swift, at diverse points in the narrative, imitates the linguistic structures of the new style as it is present in Locke. Some of the analogies between Swift and Locke may seem closer than is indicated in this discussion, but, because of the prevalence of the new style, Swift could draw equally from sources other than Locke. It seems certain, however, that Swift appropriates directly from Locke the example of the child and the manner in which he learns to speak.

One result of the scientific method of observation, logic, and reason is a language which attempts accuracy by analysing phenomena into their component parts. A written form which corresponds to this method of observation is the list. The list, which is sequential and detailed, parallels the step by step detection of physical properties by the senses. Furthermore, the list can easily be used for a grouping of the physical

characteristics of man. Swift frequently employs the list in an observation of Gulliver as a method of identification. The list is one of the formal expressions of the problem of human identity which Ehrenpreis designates as the major theme of Gulliver's Travels.[3] Ehrenpreis also establishes the connection between Swift's use of the list and Locke's examination of language. Ehrenpreis notes that for Locke, ". . . a word can stand only for a 'nominal essence' and by this he [Locke] meant a list of that indefinite number of qualities which we attribute to the substance or concept . . . ."[4] Ehrenpreis, without claiming that Swift's style is based upon scientific method, also explains that

> For Swift's generation it was a commonplace that the human body makes an insufficient mark of humanity . . . . In remarking that various properties have been suggested peculiar to mankind, Temple lists the most common as reason, shape, speech, laughter, and tears.[5]

Quite apart from the significance of the individual properties, it is just such a list of criteria which Gulliver displays for the inhabitants of each of the islands he visits. He postures, gestures, and speaks, and the inhabitants find him reasonable except for the Houyhnhnms who, at the very least, realize he is not a typical Yahoo. Gulliver's features are carefully scrutinized in Lilliput, Brobdingnag, and Houyhnhnmland. Gulliver's presence in Brobdingnag is broadcast by a list of properties which reflect a Lockean style of definition because of the concentration on easily observed and measurable properties:

> It now began to be known and talked of in the Neighborhood, that my Master had found a strange Animal in the Fields, about the Bigness of a Splacknuck, but exactly shaped in every Part like a human Creature; which it likewise imitated in all its Actions; seemed to speak in a little Language of its own, had already learned several Words of theirs, went erect upon two Legs, was tame and gentle, would come when it was called, do whatever it was bid, had the finest Limbs in the World, and a Complexion fairer than a Nobleman's Daughter of three Years old (p. 75).

Despite the sequence provided by the list, the observations of Gulliver demonstrate no categorical order and lack a logical progression of any kind. A composite picture of Gulliver is not created; he remains defined by a diverse collection of actions and properties.

Among the Houyhnhnms Gulliver is examined by the horses in the manner of biologists happening upon an unknown species. They note his stature, his hands and feet (p. 194), and one horse who strokes Gulliver's hands observes their softness and colour (p. 195). His clothes are cause for much amazement, as is his speech. Gulliver, who compares himself with the Yahoos, does so on the basis of physical resemblances. The result of the comparison is an analytic list which leads Gulliver to conclude he is a Yahoo:

> My Horror and Astonishment are not to be described, when I observed, in this abominable Animal, a perfect human Figure; the Face of it indeed was flat and broad, the Nose depressed, the Lips large, and the Mouth wide: But these Differences are common to all savage Nations, where the Lineaments of the Countenance are distorted by the Natives suffering their Infants to lie grovelling on the Earth, or by carrying them on their Backs, nuzzling with their Face against the Mother's Shoulders. The Forefeet of the Yahoo differed from my Hands in nothing else, but the Length of the Nails, the Coarseness and Brownness of the Palms, and the Hairiness on the Backs. There was the same Resemblance between our Feet, with the same Differences, which I knew very well, although the Horses did not, because of my Shoes and Stockings; the same in every Part of our Bodies, except as to the Hairiness and Colour, which I have already described (p. 199).

Gulliver's minute and detailed comparison of himself and the Yahoos actually becomes a long list of differences and qualifications which separate him from the Yahoos. Gulliver, however, identifies himself completely with the Yahoos in whom he observes "a perfect human Figure."

In Lilliput, with his walking, gesturing, and posturing Gulliver exemplifies the group of qualities commonly attributed to human beings.

The best example of the effect scientific observation has upon style, however, emerges in the description of the thorough inventory the mathematically precise and efficient Lilliputians take of Gulliver's pockets. The list has the quality of an account of specimens under the microscope:

> Imprimis, In the right Coat-Pocket of the Great Man Mountain (for so I interpret the Words Quinbus Flestrin) after the Strictest Search, we found only one great Piece of coarse Cloth, large enough to be a Foot-Cloth for your Majesty's chief Room of State. In the left Pocket, we saw a huge Silver Chest, with a Cover of the same Metal, which we, the Searchers, were not able to lift. We desired it should be opened; and one of us stepping into it found himself up to the mid Leg in a sort of Dust, some part whereof flying up to our Faces, set us both a sneezing for several times together (p. 17).

In addition to exploring the effect that scientific observation has upon language and man's identity, Swift examines the scientists' use of the child as an instance of unadulterated learning. With the possible exception of Laputa, Gulliver's speech plays an important part in his reception as a reasonable creature in each of the societies he encounters. Before he learns the language of his new environment, however, he is reduced to the helpless position of a child because of his inability to communicate. The portrayal of Gulliver as a child corresponds, moreover, to Locke's use of the child as a scientific example of the mind "least corrupted by Custom"[6] or "the development of the mind in a natural state."[7] The manner in which Gulliver learns the language also accords with Locke's observations of infant reactions to the environment and the way in which children attain speech.

In each society Gulliver is relegated to an elementary state of existence by his lack of language. In Lilliput, as on the other islands, he resorts to obvious gestures to signify his desires:

> . . . I found the Demands of Nature so strong upon me, that I could not forbear shewing my Impatience (perhaps against the strict Rules of Decency) by putting my Finger frequently on my Mouth, to signify I wanted Food (p. 7).

In Brobdingnag, Gulliver desperately tries to make the Farmer understand his feelings of pain and fear:

> But my good Star would have it, that he appeared pleased with my Voice and Gestures and began to look upon me as a Curiosity; much wondering to hear me pronounce articulate Words, although he could not understand them. In the mean time I was not able to forbear Groaning and shedding Tears, and turning my Head towards my Sides; letting him know, as well as I could, how cruelly I was hurt by the Pressure of his Thumb and Finger (p. 67).

In Laputa, Gulliver, stranded and shipwrecked, attempts to communicate his wretched state to the inhabitants of the Flying Island:

> I then put myself into the most supplicating Postures, and spoke in the humblest Accent, but received no Answer. . . . They conferred earnestly with each other, looking often upon me. At length one of them called out in a clear, polite, smooth Dialect, not unlike in Sound to the Italian; and therefore I returned an Answer in that Language; hoping at least that the Cadence might be more agreeable to his Ears. Although neither of us understood the other, yet my Meaning was easily known, for the People saw the Distress I was in (p. 131).

Unable to communicate in words, Gulliver must rely upon what the Laputans observe of his plight. Among the Houyhnhnms the problem of language difference is compounded by the fact that Gulliver and the Houyhnhnms are separate species. Gulliver is forced to express himself with actions:

> He [the Master Houyhnhnm] then put his Forehoof to his Mouth, at which I was much surprised although he did it with Ease, and with a Motion that appear'd perfectly natural; and made other Signs to know what I would eat; but I could not return him such an Answer as he was able to apprehend; . . . . While we were thus engaged, I observed a Cow passing by; whereupon I pointed to her, and expressed a Desire to let me go and milk her (p. 220).

Both Gulliver and the Houyhnhnm Master, who anticipates Gulliver's hunger,

are able to communicate and understand one another through the limited method of pointing.

In addition to Gulliver's elementary manner of communication, his initial perceptions of the societies he encounters suggest the reactions of a child. The sensuous and empirical nature of Gulliver's early responses may parallel Locke's epistemological scheme which designates sensory perceptions to be the basis of man's knowledge. Locke finds evidence for his system in the reactions of new-born children to the world:

> . . . Infants, newly come into the World, spend the greatest part of their time in Sleep, and are seldom awake, but when either Hunger calls for the Teat, or some Pain (the most importunate of all Sensations) or some other violent Impression of the Body, forces the mind to perceive and attend to it.[8]

Gulliver, in Lilliput, demonstrates the process Locke describes when he emerges from a deep sleep and focuses on the feelings in his limbs, the sensations of heat and cold, and the sights and sounds perceived by the eyes and ears:[9]

> . . . I slept sounder than ever I remember to have done in my Life, and as I reckoned, above Nine hours; for when I awaked, it was just Day-light. I attempted to rise, but was not able to stir: For as I happened to lie on my Back, I found my Arms and Legs were strongly fastened on each Side to the Ground; and my Hair, which was long and thick, tied down in the same Manner. I likewise felt several slender Ligatures across my Body, from my Armpits to my Thighs. I could only look upwards; the Sun began to grow hot, and the Light offended my Eyes. I heard a confused Noise about me, but in the Posture I lay, could see nothing except the Sky (p. 5).

In Brobdingnag, Gulliver's stature and the appointment of his nurse Glumdalclitch, who is charged with his care, make his position as a child particularly obvious. The farmer who first discovers Gulliver treats him as a child. Gulliver reports that the farmer took

> . . . his Handkerchief out of his Pocket, he doubled and spread it on his Hand, which he placed flat on the Ground with the Palm upwards, making me a Sign to step into it, as I could easily do, for it was not above a Foot in thickness. I thought it my part to obey; and for fear of falling, laid my self at full length upon the Handkerchief with the Remainder of which he lapped me up to the Head for further Security . . . . (pp. 68 -69).

One critic, at least, has pointed out that Gulliver is like a child each time he enters a new environment where he is fed, clothed and taught the language.[10]

Gulliver learns the language in the same way he indicated his desires in Houyhnhnmland, by pointing to an object and naming it. This child-like manner in which he learns language may be directly derived from Locke, who describes how children discover the words associated with different substances:

> For if we will observe how Children learn Languages, we shall find, that to make them understand what the names of simple Ideas, or Substances, stand for, People ordinarily shew them the thing, whereof they would have them have the Idea; and then repeat to them the name that stands for it, as White, Sweet, Milk, Sugar, Cat, Dog.[11]

On at least three of his voyages, Gulliver learns new languages in precisely this manner. In Lilliput, how Gulliver attains the language is not told except that "six of his Majesty's greatest Scholars" are assigned the job" (p. 16). In Brobdingnag, however, Gulliver relates, "When I pointed to any thing, she [Glumdalclitch] told me the Name of it in her own Tongue, so that in a few Days I was able to call for whatever I had a mind to" (p. 74). Similarly, in Laputa, Gulliver learns and uses the language as a child does:

> While we were at Dinner, I made bold to ask the Names of several Things in their Language; and those noble Persons, by the Assistance of their Flappers, delighted to give me Answers. . . . I was soon able to call for Bread, and Drink, or whatever else I wanted (p. 134).

In Houyhnhnmland, Gulliver is especially anxious to learn the language in order to remove himself from the Yahoos. He learns, once again, in the child-like manner which Locke describes: ". . . I pointed to every thing, and enquired the name of it, which I wrote down in my Journal Book" (p. 202) and, "I was ordered to speak the few Words I understood; and while they were at Dinner, the Master taught me the Names for Oats, Milk, Fire, Water, . . ." (p. 200). Among the Houyhnhnms, as in Brobdingnag and Laputa, Gulliver becomes familiar with basic substances in the environment by pointing and naming.

Swift applies the contemporary views of language, which Locke and the scientists held, in their broadest context. He not only examines the effect of empirical observation upon style, but explores the relationship of empirical observation and certain knowledge as it applies to a definition of man. Using Gulliver as a child, he demonstrates his awareness of the relationship between sensory perception and language; and he establishes his concern with the origins of language in the individual.

CHAPTER II

MOTIVATIONS FOR LEARNING LANGUAGE

Swift's frequent depictions of Gulliver as a child, apart from their importance to language, are consistent with his opportunistic use of Gulliver throughout the Travels. Swift employs Gulliver as a child in the same way he interjects allusions to the epic hero, the voyager, or the pilgrim. These figures have an established literary context in which they represent moral development and progressive self-knowledge. The child, or the hero as child, has a literary context which, perhaps even more than the standard poses of the protagonist, emphasizes potential emotional, intellectual, and moral growth. Besides the literary presentation of the child, Swift is obviously aware of Locke's concept of the child, a contemporary view which is not far removed from that of literary tradition. Both Locke's concept of the child and that handed down by tradition provide Swift with a standard and a current set of assumptions which he can challenge and question. For example, while the close similarity between Locke's description of infants learning language and Gulliver learning language indicates that Swift believes there is an empirical basis to language, the differences between Locke's idea of the child and Gulliver's role as child reveal more about Swift's view of language than do the resemblances to Locke.

The most influential concept of the child in the eighteenth century is Locke's.[1] For Locke the child is an instance of a mind uncorrupted by previous knowledge,[2] "wax to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases."[3] The mind of the child is a tabula rasa, which is free of

ideas as it enters the world. The most notable and pervasive antithesis to the idea of the child's mind as a tabula rasa in the Travels is the retrospective narration, which records with first-person immediacy events which have occurred in the past. Gulliver is never literally a child; he comes to his experiences with the mind of an adult Englishman. The references to Gulliver as a child allude mainly to the reductive influence of the new environments which, because of their unfamiliarity, place Gulliver in a position analogous to a child by presenting him with new experiences and situations. The fact that Gulliver, who writes of the past, can narrate his experiences with the naivety and undiscriminating awareness appropriate to an original encounter demonstrates, however, his essentially unchanged consciousness. The conflict between Gulliver the author and the Gulliver who underwent the adventures is sharpened by Gulliver the author who claims to be purged of naive attitudes to man. He believes himself educated and reformed to the extent that he can chastise the faults of his readers, "I wrote for their Amendment, and not their Approbation" (p. vii). Nor can the narration be regarded as Gulliver's re-assumption of the ingenu pose as Elliott suggests.[4] Gulliver does not beg leave to impose a fictional world upon the reader, rather he is often moved to stress the literal and moral truth of his voyages. In answer to his detractors Gulliver protests:

> Do these miserable Animals presume to think that I am so far degenerated as to defend my Veracity; Yahoo as I am, it is well known through all Houyhnhnmland, that by the Instructions and Example of my illustrious Master, I was able in the Compass of two Years (although I confess with the utmost Difficulty) to remove that infernal Habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and Equivocating, so deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species; especially the Europeans (p. vii).

Gulliver is obviously not concerned with the consistency of a fictional

autobiography, and his persistent naivety cannot be excused on these grounds. So too, there is little consistency to Gulliver's moral awareness which remains fragmented by time and place. His writing which should illustrate reflection upon his experiences and their integration into a consistent morality never demonstrates this maturity.

The suggestions of change and improvement which are inherent in the portrayal of Gulliver as a child are, then, undercut from the beginning in their implications by the presence of the unchanged Gulliver of the future who narrates the Travels. By employing this narrational tension Swift does not explicitly deny the idea of tabula rasa, but he makes it impossible to discover unqualified support for the concept of an unshaped mind. The reader may be allowed to indulge for periods of time in the notion of a regenerative Gulliver, but the naive intrusions of the future Gulliver quickly disrupt this feeling.

Other features of the narrative such as the repetitiveness of Gulliver's presentation as a child also frustrate anticipations of change. The repetitions of many of the details of Gulliver's adventures in each society cater, as Ehrenpreis states, "to the readers' fantasies of identification,"[5] but they indicate equally stasis and lack of change. They designate movement, but of a circular kind; not progression or renewal, but tiresome reiteration. The repetitions reveal that the naivety and inexperience of childhood can never be shed completely. They continually recur to frustrate personal estimations of maturity and knowledge.

Closely associated with the sketches of Gulliver as a child is the process by which he learns the languages of the various societies. Again, Swift's own views about language become more apparent as they

differ from Locke's. Locke believes that the child is stimulated to learn language by a logical desire to communicate:

> The Comfort and Advantage of Society, not being to be had without Communications of Thoughts it was necessary, that Man should find out some external sensible Signs, whereby those invisible Ideas, which his thoughts are made up of might be made known to others. For this purpose nothing was so fit either for Plenty or Quickness, as those articulate Sounds, with which so much Ease and Variety, he found himself able to make.[6]

Swift makes it clear, however, that there are several other factors motivating the individual to learn language. Gulliver's pride and his eagerness to please are prominent motives stimulating him to learn languages. These emotions disturb once again the idea of the mind as tabula rasa. Pride and a willingness to accommodate to the environment hold true not only for an unreformed Gulliver but also for a child who wishes to learn the language of his society.

Gulliver consistently remarks upon his progress in the languages of each society. The information given early in the Travels about his talent for languages,

> My Hours of Leisure I spent in reading the best Authors, ancient and modern; being always provided with a good Number of Books; and when I was ashore, in observing the Manners and Dispositions of the People, as well as learning their Language; wherein I had great Facility by the Strength of my Memory (p. 4),

makes the achievements which follow self-gratifying reflections of this inflated estimation of his linguistic abilities. Lilliput contains the fewest allusions to language but Gulliver twice comments upon his progress:

> . . . in about three Weeks I made a great Progress in Learning their language; during which Time, the Emperor frequently honoured me with his Visits, and was pleased to assist my Masters in teaching me (p. 16)

and

> I had now made a good Progress in understanding and speaking their Language (p. 21).

The reference to the Emperor points to Gulliver's use of language to impress superiors and persons of rank. A wish to please superiors may be an admirable quality in a child and a positive force towards learning language. But, through Gulliver, Swift reveals how this motive can easily become an excuse for impressing others and displaying oneself.

In Brobdingnag, Gulliver's acquisition of the language especially intrigues the inhabitants and Gulliver's speech is one of the many features which cause him to be exhibited throughout the country as a freak. Gulliver, nonetheless, takes a perverse pride in his language achievements:

> I could now speak the Language tolerably well; and perfectly understood every Word that was spoken to me. Besides, I had learned their Alphabet, and could make a shift to explain a Sentence here and there; for Glumdalclitch had been my Instructor while we were at home, and at leisure Hours during our Journey (p. 79).

As Gulliver nears the court the pride in his language intensifies and he becomes acutely conscious of style and propriety. He attempts to impress the Queen not only with his ability to speak the language but with his knowledge of the court fashion in language. The coy modesty which accompanies his description of his first meeting with the Queen emphasizes his conceit:

> This was the Sum of my Speech, delivered with great Improprieties and Hesitation; the latter Part was altogether framed in the Style peculiar to that People, whereof I learned some Phrases from Glumdalclitch, while she was carrying me to Court (p. 81).

Gulliver's admission of ineptitude is compromised in its sincerity when he reveals that it is not merely a difference in language that causes his

difficulty, but that it is a difference in style, a problem of refinement, which makes his speech inadequate. He intimates that he has mastered even this difficulty by rapidly acquiring a few appropriate phrases during the brief time when Glumdalclitch carries him to court. If this passage illustrates a sly pride in language, Gulliver's next remark makes his conceit quite explicit: "The Queen giving great Allowance for my Defectiveness in speaking, was however surprised at so much Wit and good Sense in so diminutive an Animal" (p. 81). Gulliver, conscious of his physical stature, finds his small size an even greater reason for taking pride in his accomplishments, however ordinary they may be. The Brobdingnagians are amazed and impressed with Gulliver because they do not expect speech from a creature they believe to be an animal. They do not realize, of course, that for an Englishman, like Gulliver, speech and the ability to learn language is a commonplace. The King's reaction upon seeing Gulliver demonstrates the wonder of the Brobdingnagians. Gulliver barely hides his delight at the sensation his presence causes:

> But when he [the King] heard my Voice, and found what I delivered to be regular and rational, he could not conceal his Astonishment. He was by no means satisfied with the Relation I gave him of the Manner I came into his Kingdom; but thought it a Story concerted between Glumdalclitch and her Father, who had taught me a Sett of Words to make me sell at a higher Price. Upon this Imagination he put several other Questions to me, and still received rational Answers, no otherwise defective than by a Foreign Accent, and an imperfect Knowledge in the Language; with some rustick Phrases which I had learned at the Farmer's House, and did not suit the polite Style of a Court (p. 81).

Gulliver seems oblivious to the humiliation of the King's suggestion that he has learned by rote a few phrases without comprehending their meaning and under the instigation of the farmer who wishes to sell him.

Furthermore, the list of problems with his language tends to undermine Gulliver's contention that his language is only slightly defective.

Although in Laputa Gulliver's language makes him contemptible to the very people he wishes to impress, his disappointment at their attitude reveals how Gulliver uses language to exhibit himself. Gulliver obviously regards language more sensibly than the Laputans, but his pride suffers when the language which enables him to recount his adventures as an experienced traveler is dismissed:

> In about a Month's Time I had made a tolerable Proficiency in their Language, and was able to answer most of the King's Questions, when I had the Honour to attend him: His Majesty discovered not the least Curiosity to enquire into the Laws, Government, History, Religion, or Manners of the Countries where I had been; but confined his Questions to the State of Mathematicks, and received the Account I gave him, with great Contempt and Indifference, though often rouzed by his Flapper on each Side (p. 139).

Gulliver enjoys being an object of curiosity and is disappointed when people do not find him one. He takes pleasure in amazing the inhabitants with his accounts of adventures and his own society. His acquisition of the languages of the various islands is necessary for him in playing the role of eccentric, a role which he indulges in most notably at the end of the Travels.

In Houyhnhnmland, Gulliver has an added stimulus to learn the language of the horses since it separates him from the Yahoos. But, at the same time, he uses speech to ingratiate himself with the Houyhnhnms, and he takes an inordinate pride in his commonplace accomplishment:

> Several Horses and Mares of Quality in the Neighbourhood came often to our House, upon the Report spread of a wonderful Yahoo, that could speak like a Houyhnhnm, and seemed in his Words and Actions to discover some Glimmerings of Reason. These delighted to converse with me; they put many Questions, and received such Answers, as I was able to return. By all which Advantages, I made so great a Progress, that in five

> Months from my Arrival, I understood whatever was spoke, and could express myself tolerably well (p. 204).

In Houyhnhnmland, Gulliver purports to be mortified by his imperfections; yet his pride in himself continues to be as great as ever. The words, phrases, and apostrophes, "wonderful," "like a Houyhnhnm," "Glimmerings of Reason," "delighted to converse," point to the ambiguity of Gulliver's nature, but they also reveal his unreformed pride in his speech. He bolsters his self-esteem by emphasizing the surprise of the horses and the Master Houyhnhnm at his language. As in Laputa he indicates the pleasure he takes in being a curiosity for the inhabitants:

> In the mean time, he [the Master Houyhnhnm] desired I would go on with my utmost Diligence to learn their Language, because he was more astonished at my Capacity for Speech and Reason, than at the Figure of my Body, whether it were covered or no; adding, that he waited with some Impatience to hear the Wonders which I promised to tell him (pp. 205-206).

The group of actions which is repeated at the beginning of each voyage perhaps demonstrates best the motives ulterior to communication which condition Gulliver's language. There is a recurring association of language and subservience attributed to Gulliver. The note of urgency in these passages indicates that the desire to please and acquiesce are more imperative than the wish to communicate. In Lilliput, Gulliver records his response to a "Person of Quality":

> I answered in a few Words, but in the most submissive Manner, lifting up my left Hand and both my eyes to the Sun, as calling him for a Witness . . . (p. 7).

When Gulliver is discovered in Brobdingnag he repeats the procedure:

> All I ventured was to raise my Eyes towards the Sun, and place my Hands together in a supplicating Posture, and to speak some Words in a humble melancholy Tone, suitable to the Condition I then was in (p. 67).

Again, in Laputa, Gulliver displays the same actions:

> I then put myself into the most supplicating Postures, and spoke in the humblest Accent, but received no Answer (p. 131).

In Houyhnhnmland, Gulliver does not perform this ritual largely because he is unaware that the Houyhnhnms are the ruling race. But once he realizes that the Houyhnhnms are in control of the society, and he knows that lack of speech is one mark of a Yahoo, Gulliver hastens to learn the language and submits himself to the instructions of the Houyhnhnms:

> My principal Endeavour was to learn the Language, which my Master (for so I shall henceforth call him) and his Children, and every Servant of his House were desirous to teach me. For they looked upon it as a Prodigy, that a brute Animal should discover such Marks of a rational Creature (p. 202).

The subservient use of language which Gulliver exhibits accords with the role of court fool which Carnochan has designated for him.[7] The mixture of conceit and obsequiousness which marks his acquisition of language confirms Carnochan's observation that Gulliver "seems almost to pride himself on his humiliations."[8] Except for Laputa, the pride Gulliver takes in his language is associated with degrading public displays and diversions where his speech is an element of surprise and curiosity to the inhabitants.

With Gulliver, Swift demonstrates that the acquisition of language is not prompted solely by a simple and unadulterated desire to communicate. The attainment of language, which is a mark of reason, civilization and maturity, is complicated by motives of pride and a desire to please and display. These motives are not necessarily dependent upon the individual's encounter with a new or foreign environment. Factors not explicitly articulated or officially acknowledged operate when the individual learns language, factors which go beyond straightforward communication.

The motives that stimulate Gulliver to acquire language determine his understanding of language. Language attainment in a child is ordinarily a sign of intellectual progress. The ease with which Gulliver claims to learn foreign languages emphasizes, supposedly, his intelligence and ability in this area. Furthermore, with Gulliver the knowledge of foreign languages should imply that he is a learned man. But Gulliver's "Facility" (p. 4) seems equally to mean facileness. The rapidity with which he learns languages and the number of languages he knows raise suspicions that his achievements are superficial. They point to an easy understanding which corresponds to his willingness to please others by assuming the outward forms of their society. Language, which is consistently associated throughout the Travels with external and highly visible features of both Gulliver and the inhabitants he meets, is one of these outward forms. Language is included among such properties as shape, gesture, action and clothing. These attributes provide an accurate physical account of men, but their very externality underlines the incomplete picture they give of any people. They do not by themselves indicate the thought or morality of the people. Language ordinarily goes a long way toward conveying this information. But its inclusion among physical characteristics suggests that language, too, can be nothing more than an automatic consequence of being human. Furthermore, all these qualities, because of their externality, display a tendency to become stylish and, ultimately, foppish and artificial.

Gulliver frequently appropriates more sophisticated but still external aspects of language, such as sound or cadence. His attention to sound usually occurs before he understands the meaning of the words and demonstrates a literal interpretation of the language. Swift apparently

criticized Steele for this same linguistic vice.[9] In Laputa, Gulliver exhibits his superficial understanding of language in his response to the Laputan tongue:

> At length one of them called out in a clear, polite, smooth Dialect, not unlike in Sound to the Italian; and therefore I returned an answer in that Language, hoping at least that the Cadence might be more agreeable to his Ears (p. 131).

Gulliver's response to the Laputans casts doubts on his wish to communicate, as Traldi points out; for Gulliver simply wishes to make his sound pleasant and he admits that the language is not Italian.[10] However much the sound of a language may reflect its meaning, a pleasant utterance does not convey the feeling of distress which Gulliver claims to be experiencing at this point. Politeness and smoothness are theoretically admirable qualities in a language as they would be in human beings. Swift himself seems to stress the desirability of agreeable sound in his proposal for improving the language. But such favourable qualities, like physical properties, can quickly become affectations of a misplaced sense of propriety. They can become, like Gulliver's need to please, obsequious, overbearing, and insincere. They can be instances of style which separates language from its meaning.

The superficiality of Gulliver's linguistic achievements is further emphasized by the fact that Gulliver's attainment of language involves mainly translation, or the rendering of new languages into English. Learning new languages is a repetition of a basic talent Gulliver already possesses. In one sense he merely demonstrates variations of the same ability without acquiring new knowledge. Gulliver injects early into his accounts the information that he is familiar with an impressive number of languages: "I spoke to them in as many Languages

as I had the least Smattering of, which were High and Low Dutch, Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, and Lingua Franca; but all to no purpose" (p. 14). For all his linguistic prowess Gulliver continually encounters languages of which he is ignorant. Gulliver's diversity of tongues may be a dramatization of a miniature Babel or his own inner chaos which renders him perpetually incapable of communication.

Through Gulliver's superficial understanding of language Swift severely examines the idea that language reflects intelligence and demonstrates maturity. He points to uses of language not easily distinguished from a logical and reasonable wish for communication. He shows the complexities underlying the emergence of language and the tendency for language to become distorted and removed from its original purposes.

CHAPTER III

LANGUAGE SYSTEMS AND REALITY

Swift's awareness of the personal motives and desires which influence the acquisition and use of language leads him to suspect any *a priori* systems for its function. For Swift such systems must be deficient because they stress only one aspect of language and ignore or suppress others. A more serious deficiency of these theories of language is the erroneous assumption that language equals reality; that the naming of an idea or object and the speaking or writing of words establishes truth independently of personal usage or the context of situations.

Swift is commonly held to write in the plain style using straightforward and simple words which give a hardness and clarity to his prose. It is just as frequently believed that he adheres to the assumption behind the style, which regards language as a representation of material reality.[1] Such estimations have led some critics to view Swift as common-sensical, but narrow-minded and intellectually limited.[2] Because critics prevalently hold to the notion that Swift's use of the new style reflects an adherence to its theoretical basis, it is important to recognize that Swift frequently undermines the purposes of the style and to understand why he does so. A close examination of a number of passages in the *Travels* which are manifestations of the new style reveals Swift's attack on the theory that language based upon physical observation encompasses reality.

As was noted in the first chapter, one of Swift's uses of the new style emerges in his manipulation of the list. As well as being a

common satiric tool, the list can, in the eighteenth century, be a counterpart of the scientific method of defining by recording all of the observable properties of an object. Swift exploits both the scientific and satiric roles of the list by applying them to a definition of Gulliver. In the Travels, however, the method never results in a conclusive definition of Gulliver.

In Lilliput, Swift combines definition and list in the inventory of the contents of Gulliver's pockets (p. 17). The description is complicated by another scientific effect, which is that of the microscope. The humour of the passages emerges from the Lilliputian's literal description of ordinary objects which the reader takes for granted. The incongruity of language and subject arises from the physical difference between Gulliver and the Lilliputians and is similar to the scientist's catalogue of specimens under the microscope. The inadequacy of a scientific method of observation and the resulting style is reflected in the reader's inability to know the objects without reference to previous knowledge. If the reader did not already have a familiarity with snuff boxes and combs he would receive as distorted an understanding of them as the Lilliputians. Swift provides the clues and more obvious references to the objects to dramatize the gap between description and identification by continually closing it. Without a direct mention of their function, for instance, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to realize that a razor and knife are being described:

> In the left Pocket were two black Pillars irregularly shaped: we could not, without Difficult, reach the Top of them as we stood at the Bottom of his Pocket: One of them was covered, and seemed all of a Piece; but at the upper End of the other, there appeared a white round Substance, about twice the bigness of our Heads. Within each of these was enclosed a prodigious Plate of Steel . . . (p. 18).

Until Gulliver supplies the information that "in his own Country his Practise was to shave his Beard with one of these, and cut his Meat with the other," the noting of colour, "Black," "White"; shape, "irregular," "all of a piece," "round"; size and number, "two," "twice the bigness," remain separate pieces of data with little meaning or coherence. Nor does the methodical ordering and sequence of data convey knowledge of the objects; Gulliver does not even name the objects and defines them by their function. The procedure is similar to the Lilliputians' encounter with the snuff box. It is not possible to discern a snuff box from the Lilliputians' account: "In the left Pocket, we saw a huge Silver Chest with a cover of the same Metal, which we, the Searchers, were not able to lift" (p. 17). When one of the Lilliputians finds "himself up to the mid Leg in a sort of Dust" (p. 17), the object is still not obviously a snuff box. Not until the reader is treated to the spectacle of the Lilliputian sneezing, does the nature of the object become apparent. Only because of a previous knowledge of the object can the separate observations be assimilated, and only from this superior position can the reader delight in the Lilliputians' description and bewilderment.

The inventory demonstrates the limitations of the basis of the new style which is dependent simply upon physical observation. Swift points to the barriers that the Lilliputians' own physical size and surroundings erect to knowledge and to their inability to determine the objects without Gulliver's aid. The immediate application of Swift's satire, which is the possibility of furthering knowledge through attention to physical sensations, is, therefore, also precluded; the reader cannot understand the description without already knowing the object; the implication of Swift's satire is that new knowledge is an extremely doubtful

outcome of scientific procedure. Furthermore, Swift illustrates the distortion and dissolution of understanding that is caused when scientific observation is inappropriately applied to a familiar object or phenomenon

Besides using the new style to undermine its own assumptions, Swift expresses his doubts and objections in a more direct way with his discussions of philosophers or scientists. The Lilliputians, for all their skill in mathematics and mechanics, which stress their powers of observation and their ingenuity, cannot account for Gulliver's existence. His own story does not agree with the life they know and practise; and they therefore conclude that Gulliver is an exception to the rules or a fantastic occurrence. The explanation of Redresal, the principal secretary, outlines the philosopher's reasoning about Gulliver:

> For as to what we have heard you [Gulliver] affirm, that there are other Kingdoms and States in the World, inhabited by Human Creatures as large as your self, our Philosophers are in much Doubt; and would rather conjecture that you dropt from the Moon, or one of the Stars; because it is certain, that an hundred Mortals of your Bulk, would, in a short time, destroy all the Fruits and Cattle of his Majesty's Dominions. Besides, our Histories of six Thousand Moons make no Mention of any other Regions, than the two great Empires of Lilliput and Blefuscu (p. 30).

The computations of the Lilliputians ("an hundred Mortals of your Bulk") are mathematically accurate, but they do not confirm Gulliver's story. Rather, the calculations convince the Lilliputians that Gulliver is an aberration. Swift's satire broadens here to include, not only philosophers, but tradition and experience which can hinder knowledge by merely reflecting or supporting conclusions the Lilliputians are already inclined to believe. There are, in addition, psychological factors which influence the Lilliputians' final assessment of Gulliver. Their calculations

confirm their fear of destruction and their need for security. Their histories only reassure their egocentric pride in being one of only two nations in the world. Precise methods of observation provide no guarantee of the elimination of fear or pride.

In Brobdingnag, Swift also uses the list scientifically as a record of empirical observations; and he again makes the list a method of defining man. The Brobdingnagians, despite their close perusal of Gulliver, remain uncertain of his status. The broadsheet which advertises Gulliver's presence in Brobdingnag falls short of designating him a human being. Gulliver is a "strange Animal," compared to, but not identified with, the local Splacknuck; like, but not definitively, a human Creature; imitative of human actions, but never granted the correspondence which would give him human status. In Brobdingnag the giants never assure Gulliver of the very thing he knows himself to be.

As in Lilliput the Brobdingnagian philosophers complacently dismiss Gulliver as a freak of nature. Gulliver, who does not regard himself as an absurdity, expresses his scorn for the philosophers' abilities; at the same time, he reveals their knowledge to be a pretense which hides ignorance with words:

> After much Debate, they concluded unanimously that I was only Replum Scalcath, which is interpreted literally Lusus Naturae, a Determination exactly agreeable to the Modern Philosophy of Europe: whose Professors, disdaining the old Evasion of occult Causes, whereby the Followers of Aristotle endeavour in vain to disguise their Ignorance; have invented this wonderful Solution of all Difficulties, to the unspeakable Advancement of human Knowledge (p. 82).

Swift, who contemptuously denies the scientists' optimistic belief that their methods have led to a greater understanding of truth, derides their grandiose goal, "advancement of human Knowledge," by employing the

scientists' own exaggerated words. Swift describes a lack of progress in knowledge through his reference to Aristotle, whose teachings the new philosophers purported to replace.[3] The new methods of factual observation, which represent an attempt to eliminate superstition, result in as much obscurity and mystification as the explanations of the ancients whom the scientists scorn as charlatans. Swift regards both the ancients and moderns as imposters, and he indicts the pretensions of each by implying that achievement and progress are only an illusion of time. Knowledge does not accumulate, only the terms change: Occult Causes and Replum Scalcath hide the same lack of knowledge in the old and the new philosophers. The word "unspeakable," whose very components, un-speakable, express an undoing or negation of meaning, refers, not only to the difficulties of pronouncing Replum Scalcath, but to the lack of communication and the incomprehensibility the slogan actually represents. The philosophers, for whom the word substitutes as an answer to the problem of Gulliver, indulge in the common mistake of believing that naming something means it is known and understood. Replum Scalcath has only the meaning Swift establishes for it with his criticism of the philosophers. Through the course of the passage Replum Scalcath is identified with the words "old Evasion," "occult Causes," "disguise," "Ignorance," and "unspeakable" which give the cliché its designation of sham. Within the context of these words Swift determines that the precise meaning of Replum Scalcath is vacuity or emptiness as opposed to the false sense of exactness and precision which the spurious use of words such as "interpreted literally," "determination," "exactly agreeable," and "wonderful Solution of all Difficulties" attempt to convey. Replum Scalcath can only be used accurately as a word for lack of meaning which the other designations of

Replum Scalcath support in their double implications of concealment and the absence of understanding. For Swift, Replum Scalcath as a word is an example of a corrupted approach to language which uses words to conceal ignorance.

Despite his ridicule and suspicion of the effect of science upon language, a comparison of scientific style in Lilliput and Brobdingnag reveals that Swift can write in the new idiom for purposes of emphasis. The description of the wife's breast in Brobdingnag is repulsive because the breast is subject to a magnifying influence:

> I must confess no Object ever disgusted me so much as the Sight of her monstrous Breast, which I cannot tell what to compare with, so as to give the curious Reader an Idea of its Bulk, Shape and Colour. It stood prominent six Foot and could not be less than sixteen in Circumference. The Nipple was about half the Bigness of my Head, and the Hue both of that and the Dug so varified with Spots, Pimples and Freckels, that nothing could appear more nauseous. . . . this made me reflect upon the fair Skins of our English Ladies, who appear so beautiful to us, only because they are of our own Size, and their defects not to be seen but through a magnifying Glass, where we find by Experiment that the smoothest and whitest Skins look rough and course, and ill coloured (p. 71).

In Lilliput, Swift exposes man's triviality and pettiness through a disparity of style and object. The reader assumes a certain measure of superiority by attributing the distortion of meaning to the Lilliputians. In this passage from Brobdingnag there is a correspondence between the style and the emotion Swift wishes to arouse in the reader who, forced to rely upon Gulliver's observations, cannot distance himself from Swift's attack. Whereas in the Lilliputian inventory the objects which they describe escape explicit mention, in Brobdingnag Gulliver identifies the breast from the beginning and colours the situation emotionally with his declaration of disgust. The description continually keeps the image

of the breast in the reader's mind with references to the "nipple" and the "Dug." The quantifying and comparative information ("six foot," "sixteen in circumference," "Bigness of my Head") remains in a modifying position and is unessential to the identification of the breast. In the Lilliputian inventory, in contrast to the description of the breast, the empirical data substitutes for the actual naming of the objects.

Although in such passages as the one from Brobdingnag Swift uses close observation for satiric purposes, he never applies careful scrutiny and analysis in the manner which the advocates of the new style promote. Swift includes no examples of factual recording for the advancement of the pure knowledge of the reader unless he manipulates this seeming objectivity to develop his moral satire. For instance, Gulliver's claim "to give the curious Reader an Idea of its [the breast's] Bulk, Shape and Colour" appeals to apparently disinterested scientific observation. Swift immediately implicates the motives of the curious reader, however, by identifying him with a willingness to dwell upon ugliness. Gulliver, despite his declaration of disgust and despite his protestation, "I cannot tell what to compare with," proceeds to describe the breast in detail and recreate the feeling of repulsion. The phrase, "I must confess no Object ever disgusted me so much," stands as a warning to the reader, who must question his own motives and reasons for listening to an account which guarantees his repulsion. In the address to the curious reader Swift unmasks the less than admirable impetus for close observation which conceals a perverse obsession with deformity and squalor. Gulliver frequently exhibits this association of close curiosity with titillating disgust in Brobdingnag:

> But, the most hateful Sight of all was the Lice crawling on their Cloaths: I could see distinctly the Limbs of these Vermin with my naked Eye, much better than those of an European Louse through a Microscope; and their Snouts with which they rooted like Swine. They were the first I ever beheld; and I should have been curious enough to dissect one of them, if I had proper Instruments (which I unluckily left behind me in the Ship) although indeed the Sight was so nauseous, that it perfectly turned my Stomach (p. 90).

Gulliver in the fashion of the dedicated scientist eagerly wishes to perform an anatomy of the lice despite his contention that they repel him. He desires an even closer examination of detail (dissection) than the Brobdingnagian distortion of size provides. The magnification of objects in Brobdingnag should provide all the detail needed to satisfy Gulliver who declares, "I could see distinctly the Limbs of these Vermin with my naked Eye, much better than those of an European Louse through a Microscope . . . ." By showing Gulliver's continuing desire for physical specifics, Swift reveals that scientific inquisitiveness is not a healthy impetus for obtaining knowledge so much as it is a perverse and unending curiosity. Swift indicates that there exists no limitation or purpose to scientific pursuits.

By constant reference to the passions and motives of the individual who uses the new style Swift undercuts the theory that a specific style of language assures accuracy and undermines the further assumption that language functions autonomously to capture truth and reality. For instance, the section of mariners' jargon in the Travels (pp. 63-64) supports Swift's attack upon the claims of the new style to clarity and precision. Remarkably, Eddy states that Swift included the passage to increase the validity of Gulliver's Travels as an authentic travel book.[4] The fact that Swift copied the passage verbatim from Samuel Sturmy's Mariners Magazine should suggest immediately the possibility of parody.

Without the distortion of his own pen, Swift provides an ideal example of language which, setting out to be clear, factual and accurate by using numbers, directions and minute description, erupts in meaningless disorder and confusion. The description is incomprehensible to all except the most specialized and persevering reader. Swift levels the same criticism at the new style in the passage which describes the movement of the Island of Laputa (p. 142). Written in the manner of a scientific treatise, the account is replete with geometric symbols, mathematical signs, and a diagram. All these devices, which supposedly clarify language and make understanding accessible to everyone, only increase confusion.

Book III, the Voyage to Laputa, contains Swift's most explicit attack upon languages based on theories or systems. Swift ridicules, not only the idea that language should represent material objects, but all a priori schemes for language which suppose that the adoption of correct words leads to the capture of truth. One such simplistic scheme, which bases reality upon material objects, ends in the "abolishing [of] all Words whatso-ever" (p. 158). The belief results in a confusing and impractical system which divorces people from the reality the scheme purports to reflect:

> . . . since Words are only Names for Things, it would be more convenient for all Men to carry about them, such Things as were necessary to express the particular Business they are to discourse (p. 158).

Gulliver expresses his admiration for this project and his scorn for the "Vulgar and Illiterate" who refuse to participate in it. He attempts to dismiss one of the drawbacks of the system:

> However, many of the most Learned and Wise adhere to the new Scheme of expressing themselves by Things; which hath only this Inconvenience attending it; that if a Man's Business be very great, and of various Kinds, he must be obliged in Proportion to carry a greater Bundle of Things upon his Back, unless he can afford one or two Servants to attend him. I have often beheld two of these Sages almost sinking under the Weight of their Packs, like Pedlars among us, who when they met in the Streets, would lay down their Loads; open their Sacks, and hold Conversation for an Hour together; then put up their Implements, help each other to resume their Burthens, and take their Leave (p. 158).

Swift unmasks the absurdity of the scheme by demonstrating its ludicrous operation in a practical situation. In doing so he creates a metaphor for the debasement of language based upon material reality: language becomes nothing more than a convenient collection of words which can be pulled out when conversation is required.[5] His comparison of the "Learned and Wise" to pedlars becomes a derogatory observation on the hackneyed quality of a language which consists of scavenged and well-used phrases. He establishes the lack of order and reason in this language with the disparaging connotations of "Bundle," "Pack," and "Sack." Swift continues his devastating analogy with the reference to the "weight" of the packs which attacks the ponderous nature of the language.

Swift criticizes a second scheme of language improvement based upon an application of scientific and technological principles. The language machine, a "Project for improving speculative Knowledge by practical and mechanical Operations" (p. 156), betrays an attitude to language which regards words as physical entities. Like the project which replaces words with things, the language machine supposedly facilitates communication and understanding:

> . . . the most ignorant Person at a reasonable Charge, and with a little bodily Labour may write Books in Philosophy, Poetry, Politicks, Law, Mathematicks and Theology without the least Assistance from Genius or Study (p. 156).

The machine itself is an elaborate contraption with "Bits of Wood with Paper" whereupon all the words of the language are written "in their several Moods, Tenses, and Declensions but without Order" (p. 156). Gulliver provides a running account of the workings of this machine and the supervision of the professors who invented it. He observes that after the operation of handles that changed the arrangement of the words, the professor

> . . . commanded Six and Thirty of the Lads to read the several Lines softly as they appeared upon the Frame; and where they found three or four Words together that might make Part of a Sentence, they dictated to the four remaining Boys who were Scribes. This Work was repeated three or four Times, and at every Turn the Engine was contrived, that the Words shifted into new Places, as the square Bits of Wood moved upside down (p. 156).

The original intention to simplify the acquisition of knowledge so that understanding is quick, cheap, easy, and complete results in a laborious, time-consuming endeavour which fragments and disjoints language and the meaning it is intended to convey. The thinking which encourages the invention of the language machine exhibits a static view of language which fails to understand that meaning depends upon not only words but the order and placement of words in units such as sentences.[6] Even words, which represent a consolidation of common meanings, are subject to the retrogressive influence of the machine which splits words into component parts such as "Moods" and "Tenses." The language machine reflects the application of the scientific method which purports to discover knowledge by investigation and induction. The scientific method treats language as a material object which can be easily dissected into different parts and reassembled to create pure and detached reality. Like the theory which reduces language to things, the language machine demonstrates a desire to

fix and, thereby, control knowledge. Like the first project, the language machine insures the destruction of its own goals with its capacity for self-perpetuation. The scheme breeds more books and more machines, indicating the unending operation of the system:

> Six Hours a-Day the young Students were employed in this Labour; and the Professor shewed me several Volumes in large Folio already collected, of broken Sentences, which he intended to piece together; and out of those rich Materials to give the World a compleat Body of all Arts and Sciences; which however might be still improved, and much expedited, if the Publick would raise a Fund for making and employing five Hundred such Frames in Lagado, and oblige the Managers to contribute in common their several Collections (p. 156).

The project becomes a monster destined to increase disorder. The original intentions collapse with the complexity of the scheme and the language machine threatens to become an economic burden to the public.

It has been necessary to concentrate on the extent to which Swift undermines the assumptions of the new style to counter the strong belief that Swift desired language to be factual. But, at the same time, Swift equally scorns language which is abstract and abstruse. The Tale of a Tub is usually presented as the best example of Swift's expression of this distrust, but Gulliver's Travels also includes satire on abstract language. The Laputans, who remove themselves from physical reality, dwell in internal speculations to such a degree that they must be physically roused by flappers before they listen or speak.[7] The Laputans dramatize the absurdity of stressing only abstraction and indicate that Swift found language originally, at least, dependent upon physical sensation. But languages based upon concrete reality or abstraction remain alike in their extremity and their mistaken supposition that language equals reality. Systems which stress either the abstract or concrete quality of language are, besides being absurd, anti-social and inhuman

because of their tendency to eliminate speech among individuals. The Laputans attempt to express abstraction by modelling language upon music and mathematics which describe intangible phenomena such as sound and quantity. The Laputan language, however, provides little communication and speech only occurs with the ridiculous device of the flappers. The project which finds words representative of things leads to the abolition of language. Systems which recognize only one aspect of language, the concrete or abstract, defeat the purpose of language by destroying meaning and communication.

The systems miscarry because they fail to recognize the interdependence of concrete and abstract reference. Swift consistently displays the interdependence of the abstract and concrete to demonstrate that one-sided theories of language are undermined by the very aspects of language they ignore. For instance, Swift shows clearly that the project for abolishing words establishes a generalization: "that since Words are only Names for Things . . . ." (p. 158, emphasis mine). The generalization, even though only half-true, emerges from an empirical observation that words are often no more than the names of objects. The project for improving the language is the literal or concrete application of the generalization. One kind of reference spawns the other and sets in motion an unending spiral of concrete description and abstraction. Swift continues the process in this instance by using the literal application for a metaphorical representation of a debased use of language. The Laputans' language forms another example of the literal application of an abstraction: the Laputans' observation that language has affinities with mathematics leads them to the theory that their entire language should be based upon mathematical principles. The theory, in turn,

results in a language which praises a woman's beauty in rhombs or circles (p. 136). The Laputans exhibit a literal-mindedness which they contemn in others.

Systems which recognize only one aspect of language and couple these theories with a simplistic application are unable to control the opposite tendencies of the language. The constant movement of language exposes the abnegation of personal control of language by individuals who hope these systems will replace their own responsibility. Gulliver, for instance, adheres to the new style. He remains unaware that his own speech is based upon more than empirical observation. Gulliver frequently speaks in generalities and expansions which go beyond circumstantial recording. When Gulliver invokes the reasoning of the new style to justify his mention of excrement the description becomes so general and so inappropriate that the concrete detail disappears:

> I hope, the gentle Reader will excuse me for dwelling on these and the like Particulars; which however significant they may appear to grovelling vulgar Minds, yet will certainly help a Philosopher to enlarge his Thoughts and Imagination, and apply them to the Benefit of Publick as well as private Life; which was my sole Design in presenting this and other Accounts of my Travels to the World; wherein I have been chiefly studious of Truth, without affecting Ornaments of Learning or Style (p. 73).

By creating a tension between the theory of the new style and Gulliver's use of it Swift forces a recognition of the control and judgement which the individual must exercise over language, as well as indicating the extremities of the new style.

CHAPTER IV

LANGUAGE AND CONTROL

Through Gulliver, Swift demonstrates the dangerous consequences which occur when language is equated with reality. The elaborate defensiveness and exaggerated self-consciousness which Gulliver displays in the passage last analysed in the previous chapter reveal that he is controlled and deceived by his own words. Gulliver's embarrassment could have two possible positive results. His discomfort could lead him to a recognition of the unavoidability of his physical functions and an awareness of the need for personal privacy. His desire to write in the new style, however, prevents Gulliver from understanding either and ends, instead, with an offensive justification ("which however significant they may appear to grovelling vulgar Minds, . . .") which at the same time avoids a confrontation with his unpleasant qualities.

In parts of the Travels Gulliver may seem to exhibit an awareness of the nuances of language which undiscriminating and reductive theories, such as those of the Laputans, ignore. Gulliver appears to understand that varying situations require different levels of diction and that different kinds of language have different effects. But, Gulliver's knowledge of style is only an apparent sophistication which Swift uses to expose a further confusion of language with reality.

Gulliver's idea of style involves the adoption of a preconceived set of words (and actions) which he believes guarantees a specific response in his audience. His sense of style manifests itself as stilted and conspicuous addresses to the reader which are frequently inconsistent with

his emotions. With the description of the breast, for example, Gulliver prefaces his account with a declaration of disgust. The strong emotional response he declares is belied by the matter of fact and impersonal report which follows. His claim to be nauseated would seem, then, to be an anticipation of, and a concession to, the reader's reaction. The actual description of the breast is distanced and conveys a lack of involvement. The impersonal tone comes from the quantifying statements, "six Foot," "sixteen in circumference" along with the comparison to English Ladies which provides the scientific and detached character ("but through a magnifying glass, where we find by Experiment . . . ."). The same tone of insouciance and complacency marks the hack writer of the Tale who declares "I saw a woman flayed the other day and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse."[1] "You will hardly believe" and "I cannot tell what to compare it with, so as to give the curious Reader an idea of its Bulk, Shape and Colour" are statements which assume the reader shares the same interest and attitude as the author but which actually signal a divergence of style and emotion. They allow the reader to mark the incongruity of the emotional disgust and the narrator's willingness to proceed with the analytical description. Gulliver's conspicuous account of emotion and his careful placement of this account at the beginning and end of the description of the breast make his feelings, even if they are sincere, seem stilted and determined by a sense of propriety. The portrayal of the breast depends also upon a predetermined mode, the new style. Gulliver, who does not recognize the clash of awareness which the different styles represent, attends to style as style without perceiving its relation to meaning.

The awareness of an audience which the attention to style

reflects gives a dramatic quality to Gulliver's language; he regards his literary efforts as a performance. Without the same extravagance but with the same consciousness as Yorick in A Sentimental Journey, Gulliver signifies his awareness that the reader observes his words and actions. Gulliver's addresses to the reader are similar to Yorick's in their juggling sense of propriety. Yorick suddenly realizes that his behaviour with the Grisset may be questionable, so he offers justification:

> -Would to heaven! my dear Eugenius, thou hadst passed by, and beheld me sitting in my black coat, and in my lack-a-day-sical manner, counting the throbs of it, one by one, with as much devotion as if I had been watching the critical ebb or flow of her fever--How wouldst thou have laughed and moralized upon my new profession?--and thou shouldst have laughed and moralized on--Trust me, my dear Eugenius, I should have said, 'there are worse occupations in this world than feeling a woman's pulse.'
> -But a Grisset's! thou wouldst have said--and in an open shop! Yorick--
> So much the better: for when my views are direct, Eugenius, I care not if all the world saw me feel it.[2]

Yorick obviously attempts to fit himself into the role of the sentimental man. He is not content to merely say he is a sentimental man, but he must, by a description of colour, location, placement of individuals, etc., prove his suitability for the role. Yorick adopts a neatly defined set of actions, clothes, and words whose assumption automatically makes him a benevolent and sensitive individual.

Gulliver, although he does not act as a sentimental man, does pose as the truthful traveller, the scientist, the linguist, and the patriot. A consciousness of a patriotic home audience stimulates his praise of England in Brobdingnag:

> Imagine with thy self, courteous Reader, how often I then wished for the Tongue of Demosthenes or Cicero, that might have enabled me to celebrate the praise of my own dear native Country in a Style equal to its Merits and Felicity (p. 103).

Gulliver relies solely upon style to deliver the meaning of his speech.

He believes the style of an orator, it does not matter which, Cicero or Demosthenes, independent of the orator's control, will convince the king of the worth of his country. Gulliver exhibits his distorted view of style and perverse idea of the function of language. The word "courteous" alerts the reader to Gulliver's misunderstanding of language. "Courteous," as Gulliver uses the term, signifies the tendency for standards of politeness to become overriding affectations which control communication. The style of Cicero and Demosthenes demonstrates, at best, an exaggerated courteousness which the reader would hardly desire for his own speech.

As with the description of the breast, Gulliver strikes an emotional pose and sets up the conditions in which he acts. The speech which follows establishes that Gulliver equates language with reality. Gulliver fills the speech with superlative adjectives whose very utterance he believes will convince the King that England is great and mighty. He uses the words as if they possess a physical reality which tangibly demonstrates truth:

> That, the other Part of the Parliament consisted of an Assembly called the House of Commons; who were all principal Gentlemen, freely picked and culled out by the People themselves, for their great Abilities, and Love of their Country, to represent the Wisdom of the whole Nation. And, these two Bodies make up the most august in Assembly in Europe; to whom, in Conjunction with the Prince, the whole Legislature is committed (p. 104).

Gulliver, who misunderstands the function of style, confuses persuasive oratory with fact. Gulliver does not simply wish to convince the King about the greatness of England, but believes himself that whatever he says of his country is true. Gulliver finds the language of Demosthenes and Cicero "equal" to the merits of his country. The meaning of the speech collapses under Gulliver's exaggeration and the King forms a meaner opinion of England than if Gulliver had avoided rhetoric.

Gulliver, who, unfortunately, remains convinced by his own words, continues to be blind to the faults of his own country even after the King points to the discrepancies in his accounts. Gulliver's language serves to conceal the true nature of his country from the King. But in constructing his elaborate facade of words Gulliver only succeeds in hiding the truth from himself. Gulliver desires the oratorical powers of Cicero and Demosthenes because he believes the quality of reality depends upon the level of language used by the speaker. He falsely equates size with worth and applies the equation to language; he treats words as objects which can be physically extended. Gulliver openly admits to bending the truth and hiding the frailties of his country, but he finds this a vindication of the speech's lack of success with the King. Gulliver clearly regards language, not as a medium for communication, but as reality itself. Gulliver has no idea of lying because whatever is said is true; the problem of lying does not exist.

Gulliver is an example of an individual controlled by language rather than an individual who uses language, as Said explains.[3] The control that language exerts over Gulliver emerges, not only in his self-deceiving speeches, but in the references to him as a mannikin (p. 74) and a piece of clockwork (p. 81). Furthering the idea of control is the degrading outcome of Gulliver's dramatic use of language. Gulliver, who postures before his readers, becomes a puppet who performs upon a stage and imitates the actions and speech of human beings. The difference in size in Brobdingnag particularly emphasizes Gulliver's puppet-like role, but in each society Gulliver demonstrates at numerous times a slavish imitation of the manners of the inhabitants which indicates the control imposed upon him. Gulliver, at these points, provides a personal example

of an individual controlled by language, but Swift also demonstrates language exercising political and governmental control.

The Lilliputians are presented as mannikins and puppets. Their physical depiction coincides with an emphasis upon style and oratory in their language. Both the court and the Emperor delight in rhetoric and the issuance of self-aggrandizing proclamations. Swift, while satirizing the pretensions of the court of George I, still believes that the court should set standards of decorum for language and manners.[4] The Lilliputians, however, misinterpret this role. Style in language serves as a deceptive and coercive weapon which rigorously classifies individuals in the society. Style becomes, not merely a corrupted affectation, but a sign of dangerous and duplicitous power. Language cloaks the vicious workings of politics, and the true meaning of words can only be discovered by inverting the apparent meaning:

> It was a Custom introduced by this Prince and his Ministry, (very different, as I have been assured, from the Practices of former Times) that after the Court had decreed any cruel Execution, either to gratify the Monarch's Resentment, or the Malice of a Favourite; the Emperor always made a Speech to his whole Council, expressing his great Lenity and tenderness, as Qualities known and confessed by all the World. This Speech was immediately published through the Kingdom; nor did anything terrify the People so much as those Encomiums on his Majesty's Mercy; because it was observed, that the more these Praises were enlarged and insisted on, the more inhuman was the Punishment, and the Sufferer more innocent (p. 52).

The inverted meaning of the speech is an example of anti-order reflected in language. The court exists as a system of anti-order which inverts moral standards by erecting tyranny in the place of mercy. More dangerously, the court's perverse use of language neutralizes meaning. As with the philosopher's Replum Scalcath, the true signification of words only becomes clear as the original meaning is demonstrated to be meaningless.

Swift's involvement in Tory politics and the pamphlet war left him sensitive to the power of words and the ulterior motives for using them. He was knowledgeable about the use of political propaganda and the possibility of well-placed innuendoes destroying personal reputations.[5] Language as used by the Lilliputians, however, goes further than propaganda when words become a symbol of terror and means of threat. Language, which cloaks power, controls and subdues a whole population.

The political ambitions and whims of the various people at court control the Lilliputians like puppets. The court manipulates language to manipulate others in turn. Edicts and proclamations are used for the symbolic quality of power and momentousness which they possess. The articles of impeachment against Gulliver serve as a grandiose vehicle which advances petty grievances, personal grudges, and jealousies. The articles are drawn up in secret and communicated to Gulliver in the dead of night. Gulliver's friend gives an account of the sordid background to the articles which contrasts sharply with the highly formalized style of the charges:

> You are very sensible that Skyris Bolgolam (Galbet or High Admiral) hath been your mortal Enemy almost ever since your Arrival. His original Reasons I know not; but his Hatred is much increased since your great Success against Blefescu, by which his Glory, as Admiral, is obscured. This Lord, in Conjunction with Flimnap the High Treasurer, whose Enmity against you is notorious on Account of his Lady; Limtoc the General, Lalcon the Chamberlain, and Balmuff the grand Justiciary, have prepared Articles of Impeachment against you, for Treason, and other capital Crimes (p. 48).

The articles by themselves do not reveal the background of fear and jealousy which stimulate their formation. Gulliver's friend, however, exposes the secret workings of the Impeachment with its diverse mixture of people, motives, schemes and ambitions. The account of hodge-podge

political machinations which occur hurriedly and furtively in the middle of the night undercuts the impression of order and authority conveyed by the formal statements of impeachment. Solemnity and gravity arise solely from the tone and style of the articles; the articles are a demonstration of linguistic forms which mask chaos:

> That, whereas certain Embassadors arrived from the Court of Blefescu to sue for Peace in his Majesty's Court:
> He the said Flestrin did, like a false Traitor, aid, abet, comfort, and divert the said Embassadors; although he knew them to be Servants to a Prince who was lately an open Enemy to his Imperial Majesty, and in open War against his said Majesty (p. 49).

Swift vents his bitterness about the political attack upon his friend Bolingbroke, and he does so by exposing the subversive machinations which gave rise to Bolingbroke's exile.[6] By juxtaposing the sordid background of the impeachment with the only side known to the public, the published articles, he dramatizes the manipulative use of language.

The political control which the Lilliputians experience emerges most notably in the description of the games they play. The description of the games, which are stage performances, emphasizes movement and external features:

> The Emperor holds a Stick in his Hands, both ends parallel to the Horizon, while the Candidates advancing one by one, sometimes leap over the Stick, sometimes creep under it backwards and forwards several times, according as the Stick is advanced or depressed. Sometimes the Emperor holds one End of the Stick, and his first Minister the other; sometimes the Minister has it entirely to himself. Whoever performs his Part with most Agility and holds out the longest in leaping and creeping, is rewarded with the Blue-coloured Silk; the Red is given to the next, and the Green to the third, which they all wear girt twice round about the Middle; and you see few great Persons about this Court, who are not adorned with one of these Girdles (p. 22).

The reduction of political success to games divorces achievement from individual merit and worth; advancement comes to those who best toady and

flatter. Government has no more validity or responsibility than do participants in a game. Government retains only the external signs of honour which possess no more meaning than the prize of a diverting competition. The description of movement in the passage, "backwards," "forwards," "advanced," and "depressed," contributes to an impression of the Lilliputians as controlled marionettes. The phrases "sometimes the Emperor holds," "sometimes the Minister has it entirely to himself," indicate that the control is cruelly arbitrary. The emphasis upon controlled external movement denotes the absence of will in the individual and the lack of validity in Lilliputian government. By stressing the control of external actions Swift creates an impression of flatness and emptiness which dramatizes the lack of responsible government.

The reduction of government to external show corresponds to the reduction of language to style. Just as petty ceremony replaces true government, style substitutes for meaning. The bombastic description of the Emperor of Lilliput is an example of language which is internally hollow and lacks meaning:

> Golbasto Momaren Evlame Gurdilo Shefin Mully Ully Gue, most Mighty Emperor of Lilliput, Delight and Terror of the Universe, whose Dominions extend five Thousand Blustrugs, (about twelve Miles in Circumference) to the Extremities of the Globe: Monarch of all Monarchs: Taller than the Sons of Men; whose Feet press down to the Center, and whose Head strikes against the Sun: At whose Nod the Princes of the Earth shake their Knees; pleasant as the Spring, comfortable as the Summer, fruitful as the Autumn, dreadful as Winter (p. 25).

The physical ritual which Gulliver performs before signing the treaty relates the style of language to the petty and coercive nature of the Lilliputian government:

> After they were read, I was demanded to swear to the Performance of them; first in the Manner of my own Country, and afterwards in the Method prescribed by their Laws; which

> was to hold my right Foot in my Left Hand, to place the middle Finger of my right Hand on the Crown of my Head, and my Thumb on the Tip of my right Ear (p. 25).

The description of the Emperor and Gulliver's oath may seem amusing and ridiculous, but they are miniature examples of the demeaning political games and the treacherous articles of impeachment.

CHAPTER V

LANGUAGE AND SELF-CONTROL

Swift's presentation of the earliest stages of communication demonstrates the empirical basis of language and the necessity of language to human existence. At the same time, his examination of elementary forms of communication points to a chaos and disorder of meaning which requires regulation. Language should, therefore, demonstrate the individual's recognition of the body and its sensations while manifesting the individual's control over his own feelings. For the most part, however, neither Gulliver nor the inhabitants he meets achieve a balance in their language which displays an acceptance of personal emotions and sensations and an understanding that they need control.

Although Swift ridicules the theory that language should reflect only its relation to concrete objects or things, he obviously believes that language is, at least in its origins, based upon empirical observations and physical sensations. The Lockean manner of pointing and naming, which is Gulliver's method of learning languages, suggests quite definitely an empirical basis to language. With the Laputans, who must be physically roused before they can speak, Swift implies a removal from the primary stimulus to communication.[1] Swift clearly indicates, however, that there is not a pure connection between word and stimuli. Although feelings such as pain, fear, or hunger lead to communication, communication is immediately complicated by interaction with the environment and other people. If the pain, fear, or hunger receives gratification the entire nature of subsequent communication alters. Once the individual

learns that an expression of pain achieves certain responses, the same expression can be used again to gain sympathy or relief without experiencing pain. The communication can remain the same, but the need can be anything from hunger to gluttony, relief to comfort or self-pampering.

Looking again at Gulliver in the role of a child illuminates this process. In Brobdingnag Gulliver comments contemptuously on the baby's manner of communication:

> When Dinner was almost done, the Nurse came in with a Child of a Year old in her Arms; who immediately spyed me, and began a Squall that you might have heard from London-Bridge to Chelsea after the usual Oratory of Infants, to get me for a Play-thing (p. 70).

But, previous to this incident, Gulliver like a child groans and sheds tears (p. 67). Soon after, he reveals how his language will drift away from an expression of basic needs:

> The Cradle was put into a small Drawer of a Cabinet, and the Drawer placed upon a hanging shelf for fear of the Rats. This was my Bed all the Time I stayed with those People, although made more convenient by Degrees, as I began to learn their Language, and make my Wants known (p. 74).

Although Gulliver criticizes the child's selfish desire for a "play-thing" and the rude expression of his desire, Gulliver also moves from satisfying his basic physical needs to gratifying his ease and comfort. The phrase, "made more convenient by Degrees," could describe Gulliver's attendance to his creature comforts throughout his stay in each of the four societies. His attention to personal comfort is most marked in Brobdingnag where extraordinary time and care is given to outfitting his box with tables, chairs and a protective padding (p. 83). The box has the special effect of isolating and dramatizing his personal vanity, but Gulliver spends an inordinate proportion of time providing for shelter, clothing, and food in each of the four societies. His first use of language is usually to

to make his "Wants known."

This selfish appropriation of language coincides with a morality which depends upon convenience and comfort. Traldi stresses the point that in Laputa, Gulliver can only comment on the inconvenience caused him when his fellow sailors tell the truth of his history.[2] Often with Gulliver, "what is expedient or provides comfort is 'moral.'"[3] When Gulliver cannot face the King of Brobdingnag's condemnation of English society, he declares that the King's judgement is "not prudent or convenient to repeat" (p. 106). In reacting to the King's horror of gunpowder, Gulliver describes conscience as a hindrance or "a nice unnecessary scruple" (p. 110). Gulliver's unwillingness to confront ethical difficulties results in a language which disguises disturbing facts and validates those which flatter personal vanity.

Many times Swift shows in Gulliver the tendency for language to drift from the expression of basic needs to the articulation of egoistic gratifications of personal ease. But, despite this criticism, Swift's presentation of the elementary stages of language demonstrates the necessity of communication to the preservation of life. And just as physical demands are urgent and abrupt, so too, the corresponding early expressions are abrupt, rude, and noisy. These expressions communicate adequately and directly, but they remain limited as to the range of feeling they convey and are incapable of stating ideas. The abrupt and formless nature of early stages of speech implies the need for control, degrees of modulation, and discrimination.

Language which corresponds to internal passions is rendered by inarticulate noises, shrieks, cries and roars. In the various societies Gulliver encounters, his lack of languages determines that his first

perception of speech is only of inarticulate sounds. In Lilliput he awakes to hear "a confused Noise" (p. 5). In Brobdingnag he says of the farmer's speech that "the Sound of his Voice pierced my [his] Ears like that of a Water-Mill . . ." (p. 68). His first sound is a shriek: "I screamed as loud as Fear could make me" (p. 67). In Houyhnhnmland, the noises of the Yahoos, who only howl and groan, never rise to the level of language. The Yahoos are unteachable animals who remain incapable of speech.

These descriptions of language suggest a primitive and elementary confusion which must be regulated. An immediate warning of the dangers of imposing control upon communication emerges, however. Swift frequently juxtaposes primitive forms of communication with observations of style, gesture, rhythm and other external features of language which supply regulation. The juxtaposition may be coincidental, but it may insinuate a similarity of chaos and meaninglessness in the two extremes of language--inarticulation and over-refinement. The presentation of the extremities of language, side by side, points to the magnitude of language and suggests the range Gulliver must encompass in learning a new tongue. There is the equal suggestion that both extremes are absurd. Swift, through Gulliver's report, describes highly amusing spectacles of sound and movement unaccompanied by comprehension. Gulliver gives an account of the person who first greets him in Lilliput:

> I saw a Stage erected about a Foot and a half from the Ground, capable of holding four of the Inhabitants, with two or three Ladders to mount it; From whence one of them, who seemed to be a Person of Quality, made me a long Speech, whereof I understood not one Syllable (pp. 6-7).
>
> He acted every part of an Orator; and I could observe many Periods of threatnings, and others of Promises, Pity and Kindness (p. 7).

The words "Stage" and "acted every part of an Orator" emphasize the visual and posturing nature ofthe speech. In Brobdingnag it is Gulliver who is on stage and his remarks on the farmer's reception of him indicate that Gulliver resembles the Lilliputian orator:

> . . . he appeared pleased with my Voice and Gestures, and began to look upon me as a Curiosity; much wondering to hear me pronounce articulate Words, although he could not understand them (p. 67).

When Gulliver and the farmer endeavour to hold a conversation the spectacle emerges of two individuals making all the signs of communication but neither of them understanding the other:

> The Farmer by this time was convinced I must be a rational Creature. He spoke often to me, but the Sound of his Voice pierced my Ear like that of a Water-Mill; yet his Words were articulate enough. I answered as loud as I could in several Languages; and he often laid his Ear within two Yards of me, but all in vain, for we were wholly unintelligible to each other (p. 68).

Although Swift obviously finds the refinement, control, and regulation of expression necessary, these passages warn of the dangers of excessive control. The regularity of Gulliver's speech, his modulation, and gestures do not by themselves ensure communication, although at times he seems to think they should. Despite the recognition of articulation by both Gulliver and the inhabitants, no communication occurs nor does information get exchanged. Swift demonstrates that a refinement of language can mask disorder but not eliminate it. Elementary chaos and over-refinement may simply be mirror images of each other. Their close juxtaposition suggests a circularity and cancellation of meaning. Swift's comments on the training of the nobility in "Essay on Modern Education" focus upon the same juxtaposition of extremes with the same implications:

> . . . if you should look at him in his boyhood through the magnifying end of a perspective and in his manhood through the other, it would be impossible to spy any difference; the same airs, the same strut, the same cock of his hat and posture of his sword, (as far as the change of fashion will allow,) the same understanding, the same compass of knowledge, with the very same absurdity, impudence, and impertinence of tongue (p. 42).[4]

Time and increasing knowledge of the language bring no further change or progress than the attainment of the outward forms of language. The delimiting, focusing and comparative effect, which the reference to the magnifying glass reinforces, eliminates the factors of time, growth, and size which give only an illusion of change and progress.

Swift, as noted before, recognizes the necessity of tone, modulation, rhythm, and sound to meaning. For instance, in Brobdingnag, Gulliver cannot comprehend music because the sound is on such a vast scale that the timing is lost to him:

> The King, who delighted in Musick, had frequent Consorts at Court, to which I was sometimes carried, and set in my Box on a Table to hear them: But the Noise was so great, that I could hardly distinguish the Tunes (p. 102).

Gulliver's laborious efforts upon the giant spinet demonstrate the same need for rhythm and regulation:

> I ran sidelong upon it [the spinet] that way and this, as fast as I could, banging the proper Keys with my two Sticks; and made a shift to play a Jigg to the great Satisfaction of both their Majesties: But, it was the most violent Exercise I ever underwent, and yet I could not strike above sixteen Keys, nor, consequently, play the Bass and Treble together, as other Artists do; which was a great Disadvantage to my Performance (p. 103).

The Lilliput-Brobdingnag contrast sets up many complex resonances, but one tempting interpretation of the antithesis would see in Gulliver a need to integrate the satisfaction of physical needs with their regulation. With language there is a need to modify the gulf

between howling shrieks and affected over-refinement.

In Lilliput, Gulliver's physicality dominates because of his great size. He stays relatively unself-conscious about his physical functions, however. He makes no apologies and suffers no embarrassment when he relieves himself in Lilliput:

> . . . I felt great Numbers of the People on my left Side relaxing the Cords to such a Degree, that I was able to turn upon my Right, and to ease my self with making Water; which I very plentifully did, to the great Astonishment of the People, who conjecturing by my Motions what I was going to do, immediately opened to the right and the left on that Side, to avoid the Torrent which fell with such noise and Violence from me (p. 9).

In Lilliput, the Lilliputians over-indulge in form, fashion and style. Gulliver's surroundings colour his perceptions, and he remains oblivious to the apparent size differences between himself and the Lilliputians. He identifies himself with the Lilliputians and illogically follows their rules and regulations, no matter how ridiculous.

Not until Gulliver arrives in Brobdingnag, where the size of the giants dramatizes the body, its smells, and deformities, does he display a consciousness of his own body. Ironically, he begins to act as affectedly as the Lilliputians. He seems intent upon dwelling in one extreme behaviour or the other. His desire to control the grosser features of his body leads to an attempt to eliminate them altogether. In his language, these features are not expressed. Compare this passage from Brobdingnag with the one from Lilliput:

> I was pressed to do more than one thing, which another could not do for me; and therefore endeavoured to make my Mistress understand that I desired to be set on the Floor; which after she had done, my Bashfulness would not suffer my self farther than by pointing to the Door, and bowing several Times. The good Woman with much Difficulty at least perceived what I would be at; and taking me up again in her Hand, walked into the Garden where she set me down. I went on Side about two

> Hundred Yards; and beckoning to her not to look up or to follow me, I hid my self between two Leaves of Sorrel, and there discharged the Necessities of Nature (p. 73).

Circumlocution and evasion characterize his language. Euphemistic phrases fill his speech: "one thing which another could not do for me," "pointing and bowing several times," "what I would be at," "Necessities of Nature." The phrases exemplify linguistically the way in which individuals prevent self-awareness. Metaphors such as "the Necessities of Nature" disguise facts about himself Gulliver wishes to avoid. They have a kinship with the philosopher's Replum Scalcath which also represents an attempt to use language as a disguise. The philosophers use words to give validity and authority to their pursuits, but the words actually serve to hide and maintain ignorance. Gulliver demonstrates the opposite effect of the philosopher's attitude to language which equates words with reality; he denies the existence of feelings or objects, etc., by refusing to give them expression. Gulliver cannot, or refuses to, speak when confronted with his physical nature in Brobdingnag. When the gardener's dog picks him up and carries him off, Gulliver is mortified: "I was so amazed and out of Breath, that I could not speak a Word" (p. 93). He is pleased with the silencing of the story and rejoices that his reputation is salvaged (p. 94). Similarly, when the Dwarf stuffs Gulliver into a marrow bone Gulliver fatuously resists calling for aid: "I believe it was near a minute before anyone knew what was become of me; for I thought it below me to cry out" (p. 86).

In Laputa, the Laputans, rather than Gulliver, fail to balance a recognition of their physical nature with its control. Like Gulliver they have gone to the extreme of ignoring their physicality. Their language, which uses only abstractions and avoids concrete expressions,

manifests the suppression of their physical natures. The Flying Island by its position suggests a removal from the world of sensation which the Balnibarbis signify.[5] As is shown, the Balnibarbis, although common, vulgar, and limited in their perceptions, at least reject the abstract scheme which bases language upon things:

> And this Invention would certainly have taken Place, to the great Ease as well as Health of the Subject, if the Women in Conjunction with the Vulgar and Illiterate had not threatned to raise a Rebellion, unless they might be allowed the Liberty to speak with their Tongues, after the Manner of their Fore-fathers . . . (p. 158).

By ignoring or suppressing their physical natures the Laputans suffer consequences as severe as their eccentricities. The presentation of the Laputans supports interpretations by Norman O. Brown and Charles Peake who believe that Swift consistently demands a recognition of the body and its functions.[6] With a "sublimation" of physicality, such as Gulliver exhibits linguistically, the individual is likely either to be disastrously aroused to consciousness or remain a fool. The Laputans not only demonstrate the process of sublimation intellectually in their obsession with abstraction, but manifest sublimation politically by their tyranny of the Balnibarbi. Condemning the Balnibarbis and separating themselves from their presence, the Laputans only notice the Balnibarbis when the latter rebel. Unable to understand or deal with the rebellion successfully, the Laputans use their island literally to oppress the Balnibarbis. Their neglect of the body leads further to the elimination of sexual relations with their wives and makes them objects of ridicule:

> Among these [foreigners] the Ladies chuse their Gallants: But the Vexation is, that they act with too much Ease and Security; for the Husband is always so rapt in Speculation, that the Mistress and Lover may proceed to the greatest Familiarities before his Face, if he be but provided with Paper and Implements, and without his Flapper at his Side (p. 138).

The Laputans, as this example shows, lose all contact with their senses, becoming blind and deaf when they follow their intellectual pursuits. Lest the reader or the English public exclude themselves from the attack levelled at the Laputans by regarding them as too extreme an example of foolishness, Swift implies that the infidelity of wives occurs in all societies. The Laputans seem unusual only because "they act with too much Ease and Security." Swift implies that there are varying degrees of corruption and although the Laputans are slightly further down on the scale of vice, any society may occupy their position with the erosive passage of time.

The language of the Laputans, "perpetually conversant in lines and figures" (p. 136), is based upon the principles of mathematics and music. The systematization of sound in music and the ordering of quantity in mathematics correspond to the regulating or formal devices of language such as modulation, grammar and syntax. Although these formal considerations are vital to meaning, they comprise only one aspect of language which still depends upon words for ideas and words for objects before it has a purpose. The emphasis the Laputans put upon the regulation of language arises, not so much from self-aggrandizement and over-refinement, as it did in Lilliput, but from a desire to control and stabilize their surroundings. In isolating the regulatory aspect of language they do resemble the Lilliputians who use language coercively. Their attitude to language coincides with their tyrannical political power and their invention of schemes and projects. The latter, which they try out on the Balnibarbis, represent stifling and destructive moves to conformity.

> In these Colleges, the Professors contrive new Rules and Methods of Agriculture and Building, and new Instruments and Tools for all Trades and Manufactures, whereby, as they undertake, one Man shall do the Work of ten; a Palace may be built in a Week, of Materials so durable as to last for ever without repairing. All the Fruits of the Earth shall come to Maturity at whatever Season we think fit to chuse, and increase an Hundred Fold more than they do at present; with innumerable other happy Proposals. The only Inconvenience is, that none of these Projects are yet brought to Perfection; and in the mean time, the whole Country lies miserably waste, the Houses in Ruins, and the People without Food or Cloaths.

Their schemes reflect a desire for stability but they end in chaos. In carrying out the schemes energies are misdirected and priorities jumbled to the point of immorality. While plans to increase the supply of food by a hundred times occupy the Laputans, people they could help, starve.

The Laputans' interest in astronomy demonstrates a similar desire for a stability which controls time and eliminates the uncertainty of the future. Their knowledge of astronomy reduces them to fear and superstition, however, and leaves them "under continual Disquietudes, never enjoying a Minute's Peace of Mind . . ." (p. 137). They fear nothing less than the destruction of the world by its collision with a comet's tail or by the sun's death:

> They are so perpetually alarmed with the Apprehensions of these and the like impending Dangers, that they can neither sleep quietly in their Beds, nor have any Relish for the common Pleasures or Amusements of Life (p. 138).

The desire for control, which their scientific pursuits exhibit, deprives them of any normal measure of stability:

> When they meet an Acquaintance in the Morning, the first Question is about the Sun's Health; how he looked at his Setting and Rising, and what Hopes they have to avoid the Stroak of the approaching Comet. This Conversation they are apt to run into with the same Temper that Boys discover, in delighting to hear terrible Stories of Sprites and Hobgoblins, which they greedily listen to, and dare not go to Bed for fear (p. 138).

Swift reduces the motivations of these scientists and philosophers to the titillations of fear and superstition. The disguise of reason, which hopes to do away with mystery, produces, finally, "Stories of Sprites and Hobgoblins." The philosophers with their pretense to knowledge create new secrets and threatening terrors which they use to garner power.

While the Laputans fail to control themselves and their environments wisely, Swift continues to point to the necessity of regulation in Book IV, the Voyage to the Houyhnhnms. The vivid and degenerate physicality of the Yahoos calls emphatically for a recognition of the body and for the control of its grosser functions. The civilized and reasoned Houyhnhnms stand in opposition to the portrait of the Yahoos. But, although the Yahoos demonstrate a need for control, the Houyhnhnms do not provide a model of regulation which Gulliver or the reader can appropriate. The Houyhnhnms' "Perfection" (p. 203), which is a state of mental and physical integrity foreign to human beings, serves to remind the reader of the limitations of the human condition. While the perfection of the Houyhnhnms may remove them from the realm of human possibilities, it does not preclude the idea of human improvement, nor does it lessen the suggestion that human nature must be controlled.

Gulliver, however, misunderstands the idea of control. Despite his overwhelming similarities with the Yahoos he desperately tries to separate himself from them completely. Recognizing in himself the filth and brutality of the Yahoos, Gulliver neglects all other ways of controlling these traits except the impossible one of total eradication. He disregards the devices of modification and regulation which he already possesses and which make him a considerable improvement on the Yahoos. His clothing and speech, for instance, which distinguish him from the

Yahoos, are examples of controls which hinder any further degeneration in fallen man. Gulliver can only see these features of himself as disguises which make man better than he really is. He only recognizes the perverted role of clothing and speech and ignores their proper function of regulation:

> I expressed my Uneasiness at his giving me so often the Appellation of Yahoo, an odious Animal, for which I had so utter an Hatred and Contempt. I begged he would forbear applying that Word to me, and take the same Order in his Family, and among his Friends whom he suffered to see me. I requested likewise, that the Secret of my having a false Covering to my Body might be known to none but himself, at least as long as my present Cloathing should last: For as to what the Sorrel Nag his Valet had observed, his Honour might command him to conceal it (p. 205).

Gulliver continues to equate language with reality, believing that the word Yahoo makes him one and absence of the words means he is not one. Not until the Houyhnhnms comment upon his characteristics does Gulliver appreciate that he differs in many ways from the Yahoos:

> One day, my Master, having heard me mention the Nobility of my Country, was pleased to make me a Compliment which I could not pretend to deserve: That, he was sure, I must have been born of some Noble Family, because I far exceeded in Shape, Colour, and Cleanliness, all the Yahoos of his Nation, although I seemed to fail in Strength, and Agility, which must be imputed to my different Way of Living from those other Brutes; and besides, I was not only endowed with the Faculty of Speech, but likewise with some Rudiments of Reason, to a Degree, that with all his Acquaintance I passed for a Prodigy (pp. 222-23).

Gulliver rejects only that part of the compliment which associates him with the nobility which he finds "altogether a different Thing from the Idea he [the Houyhnhnm Master] had of it . . ." (p. 223). Because of the Houyhnhnms' wonder and surprise, Gulliver begins to regard his colour, shape, and cleanliness as outstanding and unusual features. He takes great pride in his speech and reason, and, far from seeing in these qualities common ways of controlling and improving human nature, he views them as remarkable properties which make him an exception to a debased human race.

CHAPTER VI

POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPROVING LANGUAGE

Because of his sensitivity to the inevitable limitations of human existence Swift's own ideas for the improvement of language remain extremely cautious and muted. Throughout the Travels Swift shies away from the presentation of an individual or a society which stands as a model of language usage. None manage to bridge the gap between rudeness and over-refinement, ignorance and abstruseness, concreteness and abstraction. The various societies range on various parts of the linguistic scale; some fare better than others but none attain a golden mean. Even the language of the Houyhnhnms must be viewed in the light of what Rawson observes of them: ". . . the Houyhnhnms though they are a positive, are not a model, there being no question of our being able to imitate them. Houyhnhnms are not a statement of what man ought to be so much as a statement of what he is not."[1] As Rawson implies, Swift deliberately imposes fictional distortions upon his satire which prevent a direct and literal translation of his ideas into human situations.

Among the Lilliputians, language is overly polite, rhetorical and affected. Swift indicates, however, that this corrupted language is not a permanent feature and that the current degradation of the language may be the result of the court. These details coincide with Swift's historical view of language and his denunciation of corruption in the morals and language of the court of George I.[2] Gulliver comments on a Lilliputian past more favourable than its present:

> In relating these and the following Laws, I would only be understood to mean the original Institutions, and not the most scandalous Corruptions into which these People are fallen by the degenerate Nature of Man. For as to that infamous Practice of acquiring great Employment by dancing on the Ropes, or Badges of Favour and Distinction by leaping over Sticks, and creeping under them; the Reader is to observe, that they were first introduced by the Grandfather of the Emperor now reigning; and grew to the present Height, by the gradual Increase of Party and Faction (p. 41).

The Lilliputians represent one extreme attitude to language, possibly reflecting contemporary England, but displaying a distortion and affectation of language which was not always the dominant manner. Gulliver seems doomed, apart from his own failings, to participate in and accept this style. His participation is evident when he performs rituals before the Emperor, when he bows on his knees, and when he observes the many rules and regulations the Lilliputians impose upon him. This obeisance, which occurs in each society, indicates that regardless of his own initiative Gulliver will, for the most part, reflect the standards of language that society maintains. In Lilliput he acquires a perverted and corrupted language. If the Lilliputian language were to undergo reform so would Gulliver's without reflecting any credit upon him. No matter what the state of language, however, it remains susceptible to the corrosive influence of time. Maintaining a proper use of language, such as the Lilliputians have lost, requires vigilance and discrimination.

In Brobdingnag the situation reverses, not only in physical terms, but in moral and linguistic terms. The Brobdingnagians, whose size would lead one to expect a grandiose language and one perhaps not surprisingly bombastic, do not suffer these linguistic pretensions. The Brobdingnagian language as practised by the King and his court would seem to represent such standards for language which Swift could find admirable.

There are numerous points apparently in its favour:

> Their Stile is clear, masculine, and smooth, but not Florid; for they avoid nothing more than multiplying unnecessary Words, or using various Expressions (p. 112).

Their government demonstrates a similar efficiency and practicability.

Language serves the purposes of communication and understanding:

> No Law of that Country must exceed in Words the Number of Letters in their Alphabet; which consists only of two and twenty. But indeed, few of them extend even to that Length. They are expressed in the most plain and simple Terms, wherein those People are not Mercurial enough to discover above one Interpretation. And, to write a Comment upon any Law, is a capital Crime (p. 111).

Unlike the Lilliputians who use language threateningly to maintain power, the Brobdingnagians use simple language to make government accessible. Their reasoned temperaments keep the language uncomplicated.

The King uses a straightforward and practical language which furthers communication. The prying curiosity, which motivates so many individuals' interest in Gulliver, is muted in the King to a genuine search for information and useful knowledge:

> He [the King] desired I would give as exact an Account of the Government of <u>England</u> as I possible could; because, as fond as Princes commonly are of their own Customs (for so he conjectured of other Monarchs by my former Discourses) he should be glad to hear of any thing that might deserve Imitation (p. 103).

As Gulliver speaks the King listens, compares, and judges: ". . . the King heard the whole with great Attention; frequently taking Notes of what I spoke, as well as Memorandums of what Questions he intended to ask me" (p. 105). As his performance ends, Gulliver states of the King that "He multiplied his Questions and sifted me thoroughly upon every Part of this Head . . ." (p. 106). The care and discrimination which the King exhibits while listening to Gulliver's speech coincides with his opinion

of government. Like his language, the King's government is based upon principles of practicality and humanity. The King's benevolence fails to impress Gulliver, however:

> But, I take this Defect among them to have risen from their Ignorance; by not having hitherto reduced Politicks into a Science, as the more acute Wits of Europe have done. For, I remember very well, in a Discourse one Day with the King; when I happened to say, there were several thousand Books among us written upon the Art of Government; it gave him (directly contrary to my Intention) a very mean Opinion of our Understandings. He professed both to abominate and despise all Mystery, Refinement, and Intrigue, either in a Prince or a Minister. He could not tell what I meant by Secrets of State, where an Enemy or some Rival Nation were not in the Case. He confined the Knowledge of governing within very narrow Bounds; to common Sense and Reason, to Justice and Lenity, to the Speedy Determination of Civil and Criminal Causes; with some other obvious topics which are not worth considering. And, he gave it for his Opinion; that whoever could make two Ears of Corn or two Blades of Grass to grow upon a Spot of Ground where only one grew before; would deserve better of Mankind, and do more essential Service to his Country, than the whole Race of Politicians put together (p. 111).

Gulliver's criticisms only enhance the favourable portrait of the King, and such passages indicate the degree of superiority granted to the King's views of language and government.

Swift provides a number of cautions, however, which prevent the King from being taken as a model. The comments upon the Brobdingnagian language, apparently favourable, suggest uncomfortably the principles of the new style. It is "smooth and masculine," not "Florid." There are "no unnecessary words," an economy which could lead to the Laputan schemes which shorten words to monosyllables or abolish them altogether. "Plain and simple terms," expressions which the advocates of the new style use, typify their laws. Although these similarities to the new style do not destroy the attractiveness of the Brobdingnagian language, they do thwart an enthusiastic and unthinking admiration of the language.

Furthermore, Gulliver's declaration that ". . . as to Ideas, Entities, Abstractions and Transcendentals, I could never drive the least Conception into their Heads" (p. 111) makes clear the intellectual deficiencies of the language.

The King's questioning of Gulliver is logical and reasonable but perhaps too simplistic in its understanding of human nature. No society or individual could withstand the minute and careful scrutiny which the King applies. Like a scientist or anatomist the King dissects English society with his questions. He bases his conclusions of English society upon almost mathematical grounds. In addition, Gulliver's boasting posture biases the impression of English society in favour of the King's judgements. Gulliver obviously inflates and exaggerates the virtues of his own nation. The King's desire for exactness and precision easily deflates Gulliver's bombast with pertinent and revealing questions. The rigor of the King's examination appears wise and justified, but, at the same time, his estimation of England may fail to account for Gulliver's extravagant pose which distorts the portrayal of England. However, Gulliver's criticisms of the King's opinions, which he designates as "Narrowness of Thinking" (p. 109), "Prejudices" (p. 109), and "Effects of a confined Education," are only half-true. Swift gives a careful presentation of the King which is not an idealistic portrait. The Brobdingnagians experience the restrictions of prejudice and the confinements of personality, but these are inevitable limitations which mark any society. The Brobdingnagians remain admirable because they manage to reduce their corruptions to the unavoidable. In his speech to Gulliver the King combines an awareness of his personal limitations with the reception of new knowledge; he recognizes Gulliver's distortions while

still attempting to acquire an accurate picture of England; he delivers a judgement which meets responsibility by censuring but remains human by including kindness:

> His Majesty in another Audience was, at the Pains to recapitulate the Sum of all I had spoken; compared the Questions he made, with the Answers I had given; then taking me into his Hands, and stroaking me gently, delivered himself in these Words, which I shall never forget, nor in the Manner he spoke them in. My little Friend Grildrig: you have made a most admirable Panegyrick upon your Country. You have clearly proved that Ignorance, Idleness and Vice are the proper Ingredients for qualifying a Legislator. That Laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose Interest and Abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them. I observe among you some Lines of an Institution, which in its Original might have been tolerable; but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by Corruptions. It doth not appear from all you have said, how any one Perfection is required towards the Procurement of any one Station among you; much less that Men are ennobled on Account of their Virtue, that Priests are advanced for their Piety or Learning, Soldiers for their Conduct or Valour, Judges for their Integrity, Senators for the Love of their Country or Counsellors for their Wisdom. As for yourself (continued the King) who have spent the greatest Part of your Life in travelling; I am well disposed to hope you may hitherto have escaped from your own Relation, and the Answers I have with much Pains wringed and extorted from you; I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth (pp. 107-108).

It is unwise to find fault with the King in this speech, for the force of Swift's major satirical intent, shocking and condemning the English public, would be lost. The King arrives at his damning summation after noting several possible qualifications to his judgement. He recognizes that Gulliver attempts a panegyric not an accurate account. He recognizes that sound intentions originally guided English government. He seems to appreciate the value of patriotism as "Love of Country," as opposed to Gulliver's blind chauvinism. He realizes Gulliver has not been totally honest with him without condemning him. He even allows that

Gulliver may be an exception to his race. Furthermore, the King does not damn the English wholesale but the "Bulk" of the nation. The final indictment is shocking because the King, who demonstrates reason, gentleness, and kindness, remains true to his observations and judgements.

A few small, but significant, details cast some ambiguity on the generally favourable picture of the King. For instance, Gulliver reveals that the Brobdingnagians have a tumultuous political history:

> . . . in the Course of many Ages they have been troubled with the same Disease, to which the whole Race of Mankind is Subject; the Nobility often contending for Power, the People for Liberty and the King for absolute Dominion. All which, however happily tempered by the Laws of that Kingdom, have been sometimes violated by each of the three Parties; and have more than once occasioned Civil Wars, the last whereof was happily put an End to by this Prince's Grandfather in a general Composition; and the Militia then settled with common Consent hath been ever since kept in the strictest Duty (p. 114).

In offering judgement upon Gulliver's country, the King perhaps ignores the strife and division which marks the Brobdingnagian past. His own rule, which demonstrates the control of a potentially factious country, supports his judgement, however. The Brobdingnagian history also points to the broader and more general concern of the eroding forces of time. The problems of the past stress the necessity of control and vigilance if corruptions are to be held to a minimum. Although the Brobdingnagian historical situation reverses that of Lilliput, both situations attest to the necessity of control. The satire works against English society in both books. The Lilliputians are identified with an England which has lost its original worth, and the Brobdingnagians represent a standard which the English are not progressing towards. The comparison of Brobdingnag and Lilliput emphasizes the impossibility of permanence and stability in any society. Control and vigilance maintain order for only short periods

of time.

Like the corrosive effect of time, the second unpleasant detail which reflects unfavourably on the King demonstrates a certain inevitability. The King's wish to find a mate for Gulliver and breed him, as he would cattle, stresses the importance of physicality in the treatment of individuals. Swift reveals that perceptions of physical impressions unavoidably condition understanding.

The King of Brobdingnag possibly represents in his behaviour and language a positive that Swift cautiously concedes. Swift surrounds his presentation of the King with several qualifications and warnings; he points to the similarity of the King's language and attitudes to the manner and ideology of the new style; he stresses the King's vulnerability to time and habit; and he reveals the restrictions that the physical self and environment impose on the King. While Swift identifies weaknesses in the King which characterize any individual, they sufficiently prevent the portrait of the King from attaining the status of an ideal model.

In Book III, the Voyage to Laputa, Swift definitely refrains from offering any scheme for the use of language. The Laputans abuse language and pervert its function by subjecting it to schemes. But from Swift's criticisms of the Laputans, an indication of his more positive views on language can be inferred. For instance, the Laputans possess no words for the imagination or fancy:

> Imagination, Fancy, and Invention, they are wholly Strangers to, nor have any Words in their Language by which those Ideas can be expressed; the whole Compass of their Thoughts and Mind, being shut up within the two forementioned Sciences [Music and Mathematics] (p. 137).

The Laputans' futile attempts to ignore these faculties of mind indicate

that Swift felt they played an inevitable part in man's perceptions and language. Although Swift makes no direct connection between the Laputans' disregard for the fancy and imagination and the Royal Society's suspicious view of these faculties, he quite possibly parodies the Society's attempts to limit appeals to the imagination with the Laputans who ignore the imagination completely. Members of the society, like Thomas Sprat, believed that, as opposed to the control exercised by the reason, the fancy and the imagination gave "the mind a motion too changeable and bewitching."[3] Hence, language which appealed to these faculties, such as metaphors or "ornaments" of speech, was also suspect:

> They make the Fancy disgust the best things, if they come sound, and unadorn'd: they are in open defiance against Reason; professing, not to hold much correspondence with that; but with its Slaves, the Passions; they give the mind a motion too changeable, and bewitching, to consist with right practice.[4]

"Right practice" consists in "bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness, as they can" in a language which returns "to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver'd so many things, almost in an equal number words."[5] Swift definitely parodies these latter views of Sprat in the Laputans; and it would seem, then, that the Laputans have no conception of the fancy and imagination because neither the operation of these faculties nor the effects of their operation are demonstrable; these latter resist reduction to mathematical principles; they are not tangible "things."

Nonetheless, despite their ignorance of these faculties, Swift reveals that the Laputans cannot avoid their effects. The Laputans are "very bad Reasoners" (p. 136), who are vehemently given to Opposition" (p. 136). Gulliver finds them "perpetually enquiring into publick Affairs, giving their Judgements in Matters of State; and passionately

disputing every Inch of Party Opinion" (p. 136, emphasis mine). Such a description is hardly that of cool, reasoned authority. The Laputans are more than ever the slaves of passion, subject to change and disruption. They experience more turmoil by the application of their schemes than if they had used none. They fail to achieve the calm and ordered state of government which their emphasis upon reason and logic would lead one to expect. More than the inhabitants of any of the other societies, the Laputans are embroiled in the fluxes and changes of the mind. If anything the Laputans aggravate the effects of the fancy and imagination which Sprat claims "give the mind a motion too changeable and betwitching."

The Houyhnhnm language by Gulliver's report would seem to possess the simplicity, the closeness to truth and reality which the advocates of the plain style sought for the English language. Gulliver claims,

> I plainly observed, that their Language expressed the Passions very well, and that Words might with little Pains be resolved into an Alphabet more easily than the Chinese (p. 196).

Chinese was a language frequently touted in Utopian Voyages as an ideal model for universal communication.[6] The philosophers admired the pictorial nature of the Chinese language, believing that the Chinese had achieved a one-to-one correspondence between reality and its representations. The Houyhnhnm language, which can be "resolved into an Alphabet," possesses the same unity of symbol and referent. The Houyhnhnms enjoy the same integrity and precision in their poetry:

> In Poetry they must be allowed to excel all other Mortals; wherein the Justness of their Similes, and the Minuteness, as well as Exactness of their Descriptions, are indeed inimitable (p. 239).

The Houyhnhnms possess an innate moral integrity which imparts

an absolute quality to their language; their expressions coincide exactly with what they mean. By contrast human beings, from Swift's point of view, are not capable of an assured sense of right and wrong, and their language abounds in ambiguities and degrees of meaning. Through Gulliver, Swift indicates, numerous times in the last book, the linguistic consequences of being human. Gulliver experiences great difficulties explaining English society to the Houyhnhnm master:

> It put me to the Pains of many Circumlocutions to give my Master a right Idea of what I spoke; for their Language doth not abound in a Variety of Words, because their Wants and Passions are fewer than among us (p. 209).

Descriptions of his human experiences which have no counterpart among the Houyhnhnms put a strain on Gulliver's language:

> . . . I doubted much, whether it would be possible for me to explain my self on several Subjects whereof his Honour could have no Conception, because I saw nothing in his Country to which I could resemble them. That however, I would do my best and strive to express my self by Similitudes, humbly desiring his Assistance when I wanted proper Words; which he was pleased to promise me (p. 210).

The problems Gulliver has in speaking with the Master Houyhnhnm arise partly because the Houyhnhnms possess such absolute virtue that they have no relative sense of morality. The Yahoos are the only example of vice in Houyhnhnmland and they, too, represent an absolute--evil. Gulliver is the only example of a being neither totally good nor totally evil who can give the Houyhnhnms an idea of a range of morality. Consequently, Gulliver observes that

> During this Discourse, my Master was pleased often to interrupt me. I had made Use of many Circumlocutions in describing to him the Nature of the several Crimes, for which most of our Crew had been forced to fly their Country. This Labour took up several Days Conversation before he was able to comprehend me. He was wholly at a Loss to know what could be the Use or Necessity of practising those Vices. To clear up which I endeavoured to give him some Ideas of the Desire of Power and

> Riches; of the terrible Effects of Lust, Intemperance, Malice and Envy. All this I was forced to define and describe by putting of Cases, and making Suppositions. After which, like one whose Imagination was struck with something never seen or heard of before, he would lift up his Eyes with Amazement and Indignation. Power, Government, War, Law, Punishment, and a Thousand other things had no Terms, wherein that Language could express them; which made the Difficulty almost insuperable to give my Master any Conception of what I meant: But being of an excellent Understanding, much improved by Contemplation and Converse, he at last arrived at a competent Knowledge of what human Nature in our Parts of the World is capable to perform . . . (p. 211).

In the interaction between Gulliver and the Master Houyhnhnm, Swift focuses on the complexity, possibly the degeneracy, of human existence. The Master, so-called, is actually an innocent, "like one whose imagination was [is] struck with something never seen or heard of before," and it is Gulliver who educates him. "Power," "Government," etc., may be evils in a human society, but they are unavoidable. They are the consequence of being human, as is "the putting of Cases and making Suppositions." They are forms of control which human beings require. In commenting unfavourably upon them, Swift does not suggest their eradication and a return to the absolute simplicity of the Houyhnhnms. Rather, he stresses their functions as controls to man's nature, which, like man's capacity for reason, can become perverted. Swift seems to understand, however, the psychological appeal which the simplicity and innocence of the Houyhnhnms has for the inhabitant of a complex and evil world. Like the perfections of an Utopia, the Houyhnhnms' society rouses a reader's nostalgia and sorrow for the loss of purity and wholeness from which the human condition is supposed to suffer. These emotions may lead, as in Gulliver, to a reformation in the direction of the Houyhnhnms, but they can also, as with Gulliver, lead to failure to realize the ultimate unattainability of their state. Swift implies that

a greater similarity of human society with that of the Houyhnhnms may be preferable, but the reformation must recognize man's fallen nature. Swift appreciates a natural desire for primitive purity but understands the easy perversion of the emotion.

Swift's emphasis upon the inevitable consequences of being human emerges, once again, with the Houyhnhnms' inability to understand lying. At first the Houyhnhnms' misunderstandings, such as their response to Gulliver's story of his shipwreck, seem naive. Gulliver attempts to clear up their confusions with an extremely elementary account of his adventures:

> I answered; that I came over the Sea, from a far Place, with many others of my own Kind, in a great hollow Vessel made of the Bodies of Trees: That my companions forced me to land on this Coast, and then left me to shift for myself. It was with some Difficulty, and by the Help of many Signs, that I brought him to understand me. He replied, That I must needs be mistaken, or that I said the thing which was not. (For they have no Word in their Language to express Lying or Falshood.) (p. 203).

While Gulliver passes over the phrase "the thing which was not" as simply a small linguistic oddity caused by the Houyhnhnms' lack of a word for lying, the phrase demonstrates a more accurate understanding of the activity of lying than is usually shown. The phrase "the thing which was not" is, of course, a linguistic paradox. It attempts to give positive expression to the idea of nothing. While denoting absence and emptiness, the statement is not, like "absence" or "emptiness," a synonym for nothing. Rather, the phrase represents an attempt to give nothing a concrete and literal expression: the word "thing" denotes an actual object; the verb "was" is positive and denotes existence. The paradoxical nature of the statement perhaps becomes clearer when compared to Gulliver's phrase for defecation, "one thing which another could not do for me." Gulliver's

circumlocution is similar to the apparent circumlocution of the "thing which was not." But the word "excreting," for instance, could replace Gulliver's phrase. By themselves, his words could stand for any number of activities. With the Houyhnhnms' "thing which was not," however, no one word can replace the phrase and achieve the same accuracy. The statement encompasses but goes beyond the common meaning of lying as deception or giving false information. The Master Houyhnhnm's discussion of speech reveals a definition of lying which regards the activity as an attack upon a system of knowing and a neutralization and destruction of meaning:

> . . . the Use of Speech was to make us understand one another, and to receive Information of Facts; now if any one said the Thing which was not, these Ends were defeated; because I cannot properly be said to understand him; and I am so far from receiving Information, that he leaves me worse than in Ignorance; for I am led to believe a thing Black when it is White and Short when it is Long.

The use of opposite colours and opposite physical properties stresses the obliterating effect of lying and demonstrates an absolute moral sense which views every bit of evil as a lessening of good and vice versa. The Houyhnhnms view lying in a cosmic and spiritual sense of a life-denying, self-destructive force. Like the Lilliputian games, the philosophers' Replum Scalcath, and the Laputan schemes, lying destroys meaning and communication and, thereby, degrades the relationships among human beings.

The phrase "the thing which was not" provides a key to the interpretation of the fourth book. The phrase attempts to convey accuracy and reality by the use of the word "thing" which gives a concrete sense to the statement and by the use of a positive and descriptive formulation of words which creates an impression of literalness. Yet, the "truest" and most "accurate" meaning of the phrase resides in its

ethical and spiritual connotations. So, too, the Houyhnhnms, who appear extremely literal-minded, represent the "real world" in the metaphysical sense which regards the truest world as one of values. There is no question, then, of the Houyhnhnms demonstrating behaviour which can be adopted by human beings. Their importance lies in being a symbol for spiritual values and absolute integrity which are ultimately unattainable to human beings but which still remain as the standards which humans must measure themselves against.

The Houyhnhnm Master's response to the persuasive power of words offers perhaps the best example of the difference in standards which mark the Houyhnhnms' world and that of Gulliver's. The King of Brobdingnag, however, also displays an awareness of the corrupting influence of words. The King realizes that Gulliver's ability to describe the effects of gunpowder without consciousness of its evil demonstrates a lack of morality. He forbids Gulliver to speak of it again:

> The King was struck with Horror at the Description I had given of those terrible Engines, and the Proposal I had made. He was amazed how so impotent and groveling an Insect as I (these were his Expressions) could entertain such inhuman Ideas, and in so familiar a Manner as to appear wholly unmoved at all the Scenes of Blood and Desolation, which I had painted as the common Effects of those destructive Machines; whereof he said some evil Genius, Enemy to Mankind, must have been the first Contriver. As for himself, he protested, that although few things delighted him so much as new Discoveries in Art or in Nature; yet he would rather lose Half his Kingdom than be privy to such a Secret; which he commanded me, as I valued my Life, never to mention any more (p. 110).

While the King's censure of Gulliver's speech is directed mainly at Gulliver and the potentially evil consequences of the secret, the Houyhnhnm Master objects to the power of words themselves to accommodate and ease the acceptance of evil:

> I was going on to more Particulars, when my Master commanded me Silence. He said, whoever understood the Nature of Yahoos might easily believe it possible for so vile an Animal, to be capable of every Action I had named, if their Strength and Agility equalled their Malice. But, as my Discourse had increased his Abhorrence of the whole Species, so he found it gave him a Disturbance in his Mind, to which he was wholly a Stranger before. He thought his Ears being used to such abominable Words, might by Degrees admit them with less Detestation (p. 215).

The Master's prohibition seems severe and reactionary from a human point of view, but it points to the inevitable evil of the human condition which language reflects. For the Houyhnhnms, who represent an absolute virtue, language which contains an expression of evil is an impossibility because it implies an immoral complicity or acceptance of evil. Obviously, then, while the Houyhnhnms' control of language cannot be exercised in human situations, the point remains that human language reflects the evil in the human condition.

The King of Brobdingnag and the Master Houyhnhnm rule societies which maintain different degrees of good government and moral behaviour. The Brobdingnag society depicts a muted and cautious suggestion of human possibilities. The Houyhnhnm society of horses possesses such an absolute degree of virtue that it demonstrates more of what the human condition is not than what it is. The impossibility of finding in the Travels a model for the use of language indicates that Swift believes that models or schemes themselves are anti-human; he implies that the proper function of language must be discovered in human situations and not in schemes produced in books or satires. Swift states his distrust of schemes indirectly, then, by imposing distortions of English society upon each of his imaginary societies and, thereby, preventing a direct application to human situations. He refers more directly to the necessity

of working out human problems in a human context with his presentation of Pedro de Mendez at the end of the Travels. Although some critics have found in Don Pedro Swift's model of human behaviour, he functions mainly as Swift's reference to a human world outside the satire.[7] Gulliver's shocked reaction to the fact that Don Pedro and the sailors speak a language reveals how greatly he is removed from human society:

> When they began to talk, I thought I never heard or saw any thing so unnatural; for it appeared to me as monstrous as if a Dog or a Cow should speak in England, or a Yahoo in Houyhnhnmland (p. 250).

His attempt to view language in the same pure manner of the Houyhnhnms proves how unfit he is for living in a human world. He cannot understand Don Pedro's amazement at his story and he becomes very indignant:

> All which he looked upon as if it were a Dream or a Vision; whereat I took great Offence: For I had quite forget the Faculty of Lying, so peculiar to Yahoos in all Countries where they preside, and consequently the Disposition of suspecting Truth in others of their own Species (p. 251).

With the repeated instances of Gulliver's inhuman and unnatural responses to Don Pedro and his own family Swift makes a final reference to the distortions of behaviour caused by fiction and the necessity of realizing behaviour in human situations.

CHAPTER VII

LANGUAGE AND LITERARY RESPONSE

Swift's exposure of distorting preconceptions of language and his distrust of the persuasive power of words form a condemnation of the misuse of literature. Swift believes that simplistic approaches to language lead to literature which encourages the reader to abandon responsibility for his own behaviour in favour of literary models. Swift understands, furthermore, that literature succeeds in imposing its worlds upon the reader because the reader willingly accedes to his own manipulation. Consequently, part of the moral persuasion of Swift's satire is an indictment of the reader's response to literature.

Swift finds in the scientific voyage the literary manifestation of language abuses. The scientific voyage with its use of the new style purports to be fact or a depiction of reality. The claim to reality makes the reader's belief in the author and the account he gives axiomatic. Gulliver blatantly justifies his fantastic story upon the grounds of veracity, and he derides other writers who appeal to readers' sensationalism:

> Thus, gentle Reader, I have given thee a faithful History of my Travels for Sixteen Years, and above Seven Months; wherein I have not been as studious of Ornament as of Truth. I could perhaps like others astonished thee with strange improbable Tales; but I rather chose to relate plain Matter of Fact in the simplest Manner and Style; because my principal Design was to inform, and not amuse thee (p. 255).

Gulliver's understanding of literature derives directly from his equation of language and reality. He believes that whatever he records must be truth, that he personally does not alter the perception of reality; he

denies that his work suffers from authorial manipulation and persuasion.

Believing that his accounts capture truth, Gulliver assumes that his work will automatically improve the reader's morality; he supposes that a straightforward record of facts will educate and instill virtue in the reader: "a Traveller's chief Aim should be to make Men wiser and better, and to improve their Minds by the bad, as well as good Example of what they deliver concerning foreign Places" (p. 255). Using the apparent knowledge and experience gleaned from his voyages as justification, Gulliver asserts a moral superiority which allows him to impose instruction upon the reader. By implication Gulliver regards the reader as a morally inferior person who should submit contritely to his authority.

Gulliver projects his fallacious equation of language and reality upon the reader and not only asks, but demands, that the reader believe his story and adopt his advice for moral improvement. Gulliver, who assumes that, like himself, the reader regards words as reality, believes that by the very act of reading the Travels the reader automatically identifies with the protagonist; for Gulliver, the reader lacks any awareness of language as artifice or medium; the reader should experience the same adventures, acquire the same knowledge and undergo the same moral reformation as himself. The outrage he expresses in the letter to Cousin Sympson arises precisely because his readers have refrained from such a simplistic reading of his work. This does not alter the fact that Gulliver felt readers should transform themselves completely upon absorbing his book. He attributes the failure of this response in the reader, not to his pretentious expectations of literature, nor to an exalted sense of his own capabilities, but to the wickedness of

the human race. He blames his Cousin Sympson for encouraging the publication of his works:

> I do in the next Place complain of my own great Want of Judgement, in being prevailed upon by the Intreaties and false Reasonings of you and some others, very much against mine own Opinion, to suffer my Travels to be published. Pray bring to Mind how often I desired you to consider, when you insisted on the Motive of publick Good; that the Yahoos were a species of Animals utterly incapable of Amendment by Precepts or Examples: And so it hath proved; for instead of seeing a full Stop put to all Abuses and Corruptions, at least in this little Island, as I had Reason to expect: Behold, after above six Months Warning, I cannot learn that my Book hath produced one single Effect according to mine Intentions . . . (p. v).

To the extent that the reader accepts Gulliver's equation of language and reality, he exposes his lack of intelligence and his immorality. The reader who makes language and reality equivalent demonstrates a willingness to forfeit the responsibility of working out problems of existence in a human context; he instead adopts literary representations of reality. In doing so, he reveals in himself a simplistic approach to life which reduces its complexities to convenient guidelines for living. As with Gulliver's determination to follow the new style, the reader runs the risk of self-deception in attempting to adopt a literary conception of reality. He may suffer the absurdities of ignoring or suppressing characteristics of human existence which the refined ideal excludes. At worst, the reader who confuses language with reality is controlled by the laws and constructs of the literary world he adopts; he resides in lifeless, disembodied worlds of words divorced from meaning and human existence.

Despite Swift's exposure and criticism of the reader's equation of language and reality, he recognizes that by its very use of language, literature is, at least originally, dependent upon a real world. And

while there exists no absolute equation of words and truth, the boundary between art and life is by no means definite or clear. Consequently, Swift acknowledges the ambiguous relationship of art and life, but continually subverts the features of fiction which encourage the reader's tendency to equate the two. For instance, Swift uses a non-fictional form such as the scientific voyage with the understanding that while it does not capture reality, the scientific voyage does reflect the reader's reliance upon empirical knowledge in real life. At the same time, however, Swift juxtaposes his presentation of the scientific voyage with that of a fantasy, supporting Rawson's observation of Swift's "blurring of boundary lines."[1] The scientific voyage and the fantasy represent formally the beginning and end of single-minded mental processes and an uncomplicated sequence of time. The scientific voyage corresponds to the logical processes of the mind which start from an irrefutable fact and reason inductively from one step to the next. These logical processes combine with the psychological effects of time which give an impression of straightforward linear progression. The passage of time gives a force to logic which indicates that logic is not an independent phenomenon. Time catches the individual up in logic until it ends in fantasy or absurdity. Swift implies that fantasy is only the conclusion of a line of reasoning based on fact which gains acceptance by the lulling effect of time. Furthermore, the impression of chronological time in the scientific voyage reinforces Gulliver's claim of moral progression and development.

Swift, however, subverts the normal processes of time to upset the sense of validity it provides to logic and the narrator's moral progression. By juxtaposing the extremes of form, fantasy and scientific voyage, Swift brings the reader quickly and abruptly to the "logical" end

of the reasoning process. He presents the reader with the absurd conclusion which stifles the insidious and accommodating capacity of time.

For instance, Gulliver's concern for his reputation and that of the treasurer's wife in Lilliput, shocks and surprises the reader with its lack of common sense. Gulliver's introduction to the incident begins reasonably enough:

> I am here obliged to vindicate the Reputation of an excellent Lady, who was an Innocent sufferer upon my Account. The Treasurer took a Fancy to be jealous of his Wife, from the Malice of some evil Tongues, who informed him that her Grace had taken a violent Affection for my Person; and the Court-Scandal ran for some Time that she once came privately to my Lodging (p. 45).

The pose of indignation that Gulliver assumes does not yet seem inappropriate. The reader can accept the fact that, despite the physical impossibility of any sexual relationship, Gulliver fears for the wife's reputation and his own but not without his recognition of the absurdity of the accusations. Gulliver's next words prove, however, that his response to his environment is so complete that he forgets the obvious physical differences between himself and the Lilliputians. He defends himself against the charges with complete seriousness:

> This I solemnly declare to be a most infamous Falshood, without any Grounds, farther than that her Grace was pleased to treat me with all innocent Marks of Freedom and Friendship. I own she came often to my House, but always publickly, nor ever without three more in the Coach, who were usually her Sister, any young Daughter, and some particular Acquaintance . . . (pp. 45-46).

Gulliver continues with a lengthy and detailed defence which can only amaze and amuse the reader. The shock of the passage depends upon the entire context of Book I whose fictional premises the reader has perhaps allowed to achieve dominance in his imagination; Gulliver's illogical defence reminds the reader of his willingness to accept Gulliver's words

as truth and of his susceptibility to fictional appropriations of time and logic. This same passage causes the reader to question Gulliver's claims to be experienced and knowledgeable. Gulliver writes of events which have already occurred; yet he demonstrates no judgement or reflection upon these events which would edit such absurdities from his account. Rather, reliving his experiences as he writes, deceiving himself by equating language with truth, Gulliver loses sight of reality. With Gulliver's blind acceptance of the Lilliputian world, Swift draws the reader's attention to the obvious fictionality of the Travels and warns against simplistic reactions to it.

Swift continues his subversion of simplistic responses to the Travels by exposing its exploitation of the reader's reliance upon empirical knowledge. Swift reveals through Gulliver that fiction easily appropriates the consistency provided by the operation of physical laws in life. By Gulliver's overt violation or misuse of physical principles and empirical evidence, Swift draws the reader's attention to the disjunction of art and life. At the end of voyages one and two Gulliver displays physical proofs of his adventures for the skeptical captains who rescue him. The tiny sheep and cattle, the hollowed out corns made into silver cups donated to Gresham College are Swift's dig at the Royal Society's insistence upon empirical evidence. But, Gulliver's sudden materialization of the fictional world (into the real world) as physical objects which have an actual location in English society points the reader to an obvious overlap of art and life. Gulliver's impingement on the real world jolts the reader out of any complacent acceptance of the Travels. By pointing to the Travels' appropriation of overt proofs of existence, Swift alerts the reader to fictional premises and liberties.

In keeping with his attempts to prevent simplistic responses to fiction, Swift exposes nasty psychological reasons which prompt the reader to blend art and life. The questionable psychological tendencies which Gulliver displays, such as exhibitionism, perverse curiosity, and obeisance implicate the reader as well. Like Gulliver, who postures and performs throughout the Travels, the reader in his willingness to identify with the protagonist reflects, by extension, a tendency to be an exhibitionist. By participating in the narrator's exhibitionism, the reader agrees to allow literature to become a vehicle for personal display.

If the reader refrains from an identification with the fiction or the protagonist and claims to read out of curiosity, he still feels Swift's sting. Gulliver compromises his pose of the curious scientist at every turn. His curiosity becomes an excuse for a prying voyeurism and an opportunity to dwell on filth and deformity. Swift denies that observation exists for its own sake. The interest in other people and in their habits demonstrates an indulgence in voyeurism, the twin half of exhibitionism. Similarly, Swift challenges the curiosity justified by a desire solely to acquire knowledge, which forms the rationale of scientists. The reader's quest for knowledge may only reflect a nasty predisposition to know the business of others and to discover scandal and wrongdoing. The search for knowledge can lead to the invasion and violation of the privacy of other individuals. These tendencies emerge most obviously in Lilliput where curiosity justifies a prying political power. The search of Gulliver's pockets, recorded in the new style, corresponds to the scientists' unending pursuit of knowledge. Such quests mask a desire to control individuals and society with a complete knowledge of their lives. In Laputa, the attack on scientists clearly illustrates the

lust for power and control which stands behind a scientific curiosity. The reader who purports to find a satisfaction for his curiosity in literature or a means of acquiring new knowledge reflects a tendency to allow literature to become a titillating side-show, a gossipy scandal-sheet, or coercive political propaganda.

As Swift attacks the reader's responses to his work, the reader's proclivity to equate language and reality, art and life, he demonstrates an awareness of his own manipulation of language. The more or less general undermining of literature does by extension implicate Swift and his motives for writing. He acknowledges in himself, therefore, the voyeurism, exhibitionism, and desire for control which as a satirist of literature his own language reflects.

SUMMARY

Swift's concern with language in the Travels emerges as a challenge to the theories of Locke and the Royal Society, the two most important influences on language in Swift's century. Combining Locke's method of definition by listing of observable properties with the scientist's similar penchant for empirical perception, Swift reveals their inadequacies as means of obtaining knowledge. Appropriating Locke's understanding of how and why children learn language, Swift stresses, through Gulliver, the numerous motives beyond communication and the satisfaction of biological needs which stimulate the use of language. While affirming Locke's insistence on an empirical basis to language, Swift presents a Gulliver who uses language for self-exhibition, voyeurism and subservience.

Swift criticizes, not only the linguistic theories of Locke and the Royal Society, but all imposed systems for the function of language. Again, with the posturing of Gulliver, Swift exposes that the underlying fallacy of a priori schemes of language use is the equation of language with reality. Gulliver's acceptance of this equation by his adoption of the new style results in his self-deception and the suppression of his physical self. Swift reveals that at the basis of these schemes is the desire to control other individuals and society, which he dramatizes as a coercive political power.

In contrast to imposed schemes of language which control the individual, Swift implies that the individual has a responsibility to recognize and regulate his fallen nature, and that his language should

manifest both. The means of language control, style, modulation, rhythm, are perversely divorced from meaning and are used for their own sake, however, leaving communication as chaotic as it was in its early stages. Swift calls for a balance between a recognition of physical nature and the means of controlling it.

No society or individual in the Travels possesses this balance, not even the most favourably presented, the Brobdingnagians. This restraint on Swift's part coincides with his distrust of imposed systems of language use. By denying himself and his readers a model for the operation of language, he thwarts tendencies in himself to dictate the behaviour of others; and he frustrates the reader's willingness to find solutions to human problems outside the difficulty of human existence in literature or the words of another individual.

Ironically, the Houyhnhnms possess a language which is consistent with reality; the integrity of Houyhnhnm language arises from their absolute virtue which humans do not enjoy. But, like Gulliver, the reader may attempt to use language in the same way as the Houyhnhnms, making a self-deceiving equation of language and reality. To the extent that the reader of the Travels participates in this dangerous folly, he demonstrates an abnegation of his responsibility to humanity in favour of verbal worlds. To the extent that the reader participates in Gulliver's equation of language and reality, he displays his tendencies to self-exhibition, voyeurism and subservience.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

[1]Herbert Davis, Jonathan Swift: Essays on His Satire and Other Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 13; Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 296.

[2]R. A. Greenberg, ed., Gulliver's Travels, by Jonathan Swift, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1970), p. 64, n. 1.

[3]Marjorie Nicolson and Nora M. Mohler, "The Scientific Background of Swift's Voyage to Laputa," Annals of Science, 2 (1937), 321.

[4]Richard Foster Jones, "Science and English Prose Style in the Third Quarter of the Seventeenth Century," PMLA, 45 (1930); rpt. in The Seventeenth Century, ed. Richard Foster Jones (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951), p. 84.

[5]Paul Cornelius, Languages in Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1965), p. 25.

[6]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 488 (Bk. III, Ch. ix); Stephen K. Land (From Signs to Propositions: The concept of form in eighteenth-century semantic theory, Longman Linguistics Library (London: Longman, 1974), p. 7), quotes this same passage from Locke and makes essentially the same observation of Locke's influence upon the language. Land claims that the "primary historical importance of Locke's work lies in its association of linguistic study and epistemology."

[7]Locke, Essay, p. 516 (Bk. III, Ch. xi).

[8]Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels, ed. R. A. Greenberg, Norton Critical Edition (New York: Norton, 1970), p. 73. All further references to Gulliver's Travels will be cited in the body of the text by page number.

[9]Jonathan Swift, A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue, ed. Herbert Davis, Prose Works (1957); rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), IV, 15.

Chapter I

[1]John D. Seelye, "Hobbes' Leviathan and the Giantism Complex in the First Book of Gulliver's Travels," JEGP, 60 (1961), 234.

[2]Helmut Papajewski, "Swift und Berkeley," Anglia, 77 (1959), 29.

[3]Irvin Ehrenpreis, "The Meaning of Gulliver's Last Voyage," REL, 3 (1962), 19.

[4]Irvin Ehrenpreis, "The Literary Side of a Satirist's Work," Minn R, 2 (1961-62), 189.

[5]Ehrenpreis, "Gulliver's Last Voyage," p. 26.

[6]Locke, Essay, p. 63 (Bk. I, Ch. ii).

[7]W. B. Carnochan, "Gulliver's Travels: An Essay on the Human Understanding?" MLQ, 25 (1964), 7.

[8]Locke, p. 116 (Bk. II, Ch. i).

[9]Carnochan, "An Essay," p. 8. Carnochan's examination of Swift's use of Locke and his presentation of Gulliver as a child are basic to my discussion, but I disagree with Carnochan's suggestion that the entire Travels is a demonstration of Locke's epistemology with Gulliver in the role of a Lockean man.

[10]Robert P. Fitzgerald, "The Structure of Gulliver's Travels," SP, 71 (1974), 251.

[11]Locke, pp. 479-80 (Bk. III, Ch. ix).

Chapter II

[1]John W. Adamson, "Introduction" to The Educational Writings of John Locke (Cambridge: University Press, 1922), p. 6.

[2]Locke, Essay, p. 63 (Bk. I, Ch. ii).

[3]John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education, in Adamson, Educational Writings, p. 179 (sec. 216).

[4]Robert C. Elliott, "Gulliver as Literary Artist," ELH, 19 (1951-52), 50.

[5]Irvin Ehrenpreis, "Swift and Satire," CE, 13 (1952), 312.

[6]Locke, Essay, p. 405 (Bk. III, Ch. ii).

[7]W. B. Carnochan, "Some Roles of Lemuel Gulliver," TSLL, 5 (1963-64), 522.

[8]Ibid., p. 523.

[9]Denis Donoghue, ed., in "Introduction" to Jonathan Swift, Penguin Critical Anthologies (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 23. Without citing his source, Donoghue claims that Swift "ridiculed Steele for attending to the cadences of words without consulting their meaning."

[10]Ila Dawson Traldi, "Gulliver the 'Educated': Unity in the Voyage to Laputa," PLL, 4 (1968), 47.

Chapter III

[1]Walter J. Ong, "Swift on the Mind: The Myth of Asepsis," MLQ, 15 (1954), p. 212.

[2]George Orwell, "Politics vs Literature: An Examination of Gulliver's Travels," Polemic, 5 (1946), rpt. in Donoghue, p. 346.

[3]Jones, p. 105.

[4]W. A. Eddy, Gulliver's Travels: A Critical Study (1923; reissued New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), pp. 65-66.

[5]C. J. Rawson, Gulliver and the Gentle Reader: Studies in Swift and Our Time (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 95.

[6]Land, p. 5, discusses the lack of concern for and understanding of syntax in linguistic theories of the period such as John Wilkins'.

[7]Traldi, p. 39.

Chapter IV

[1]Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub in Jonathan Swift: A Selection of His Works, ed., Philip Pinkus, College Classics in English (Toronto: Macmillan, 1965), p. 415.

[2]Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey, ed. Graham Petrie (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), p. 75.

[3]Edward W. Said, "Swift's Tory Anarchy," ECS, 3 (1969-70), 54.

[4]Swift, Proposal for Correcting, p. 10.

[5]Irvin Ehrenpreis, The Personality of Jonathan Swift (London: Methuen & Co., 1958), p. 84.

[6]Ibid., p. 84.

Chapter V

[1]Traldi, p. 36.

[2]Ibid., p. 39.

[3]Ibid., p. 39.

[4]Jonathan Swift, "Essay on Modern Education," ed. Herbert Davis, Prose Works (1957; rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), III, 150-51.

[5]Traldi, p. 36.

[6]Norman O. Brown, "The Excremental Vision," Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History (Chicago: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1959); rpt. in Donoghue, p. 192; Charles Peake, "Swift and the Passions," MLR, 55 (1960), 170.

Chapter VI

[1]Rawson, p. 30.

[2]Swift, Proposal for Correcting, p. 15.

[3]Thomas Sprat, History of the Royal Society, 1667; rpt. Jones, p. 86.

[4]Ibid., p. 86.

[5]Ibid., p. 85.

[6]Cornelius, p. 75.

[7]Raymond Bentman, "Satiric Structure and Tone in the Conclusion of Gulliver's Travels," SEL, 11 (1972), 537; Ehrenpreis, Last Voyage, p. 37; Kathleen Williams, "Gulliver's Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," ELH, 18-19 (1951-52), 283.

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[1]Rawson, p. 109.

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